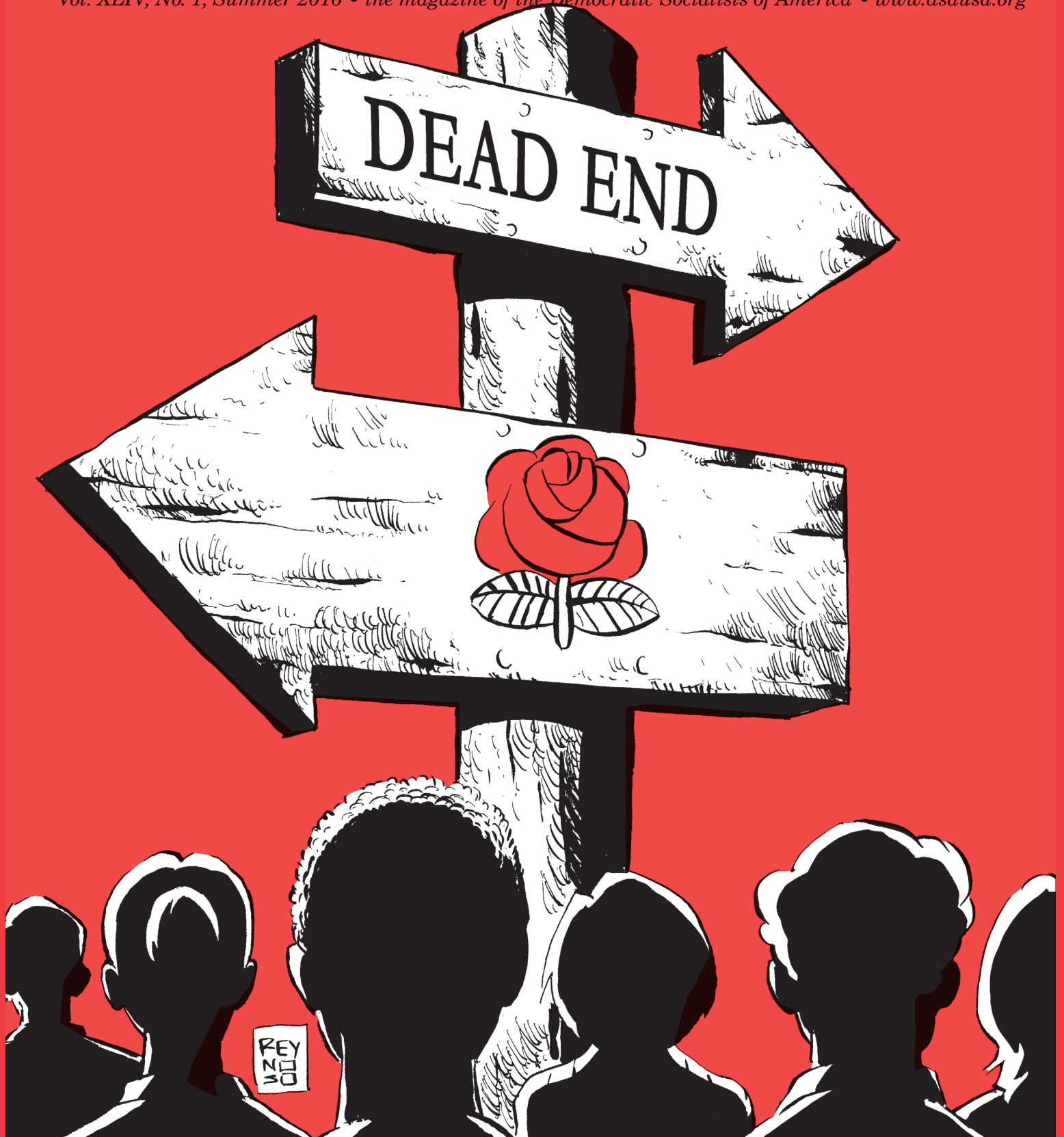


Post-Election Strategies • Grassroots Actions



DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Vol. XLIV, No. 1, Summer 2016 • the magazine of the Democratic Socialists of America • www.dsusa.org



Building Working-Class Power

By Maria Svart

Much ink has been spilled this year about the racism of working-class whites who support Donald Trump. But make no mistake: this narrative is part of the class war. Poor and working-class whites are no more racist than higher income whites. Scapegoating them gives cover to efforts funded by wealthy whites on both sides of the aisle to distract from the economic rampage conducted by the 1% against the 99% of all races.



At the same time that there is a right-wing backlash against the civil rights, feminist and LGBTQ rights movements of recent decades, there is a capitalist move to co-opt them. Consider the claim that a vote for Hillary Clinton was the only feminist choice in the primary. Look at the corporate adoption of “diversity trainings” to fix interpersonal relationships without addressing deep-seated structural power imbalances or the promotion of “black or brown faces to high places” without accountability to a poor and working-class base.

Trump and the forces he is unleashing are a threat to democracy and to the left. White supremacy is woven into the fabric of the United States, and I know from my own union experience that racial and gender divisions among workers are real. But the fight against racism and reaction will be lost without the poor and working-class whites that moderates mock.

The only thing that consistently brings people together despite differences is concrete action in solidarity with each other. Whites whose communi-

ties have been devastated by “free trade” and people with brown skin who face the constant threat of death by police or vigilantes as well as economic attacks have every reason to unite, but carefully. Solidarity builds familiarity, and it builds trust, but it takes time.

Without class consciousness and class power, how can we disrupt and take back our economy? Socialists believe that “an injury to one is an injury to all.” To stand strong against the capitalist class in the economic war, we need also to stand side by side in social and cultural power struggles against racism, sexism, and other isms. Islamophobia, violence against women, racist police violence, transphobia and homophobia *are* in fact working-class issues. Many of us poor, precarious working-class, and momentarily-comfortable-but-still-selling-our-labor folks are women, Muslim, black, brown, or some other color than “white.” We are LGBTQ, immigrants, and friends or relatives of some or all of the above.

Solidarity is not a “me for you” thing, but a “we for us” thing. A divided working class is a defeated working class.

It is for this reason that we in DSA see our primary task as strengthening the grassroots left by participating in and building local multi-racial coalitions that are consciously anti-racist and anti-capitalist. Through this work, we hope to help expand the number of whites committed to and engaging in action for racial justice, help develop solidarity among different communities of color routinely pitted against each other, and help strengthen the institutions rooted in communities of color that specifically empower the working-class and poor in those communities.

Look around you. Capitalists guarantee that we have many opportunities to build this solidarity. As I write in mid-May, almost 40,000 Verizon workers are out on strike. This strike is not just about these workers, but about all of us who have not yet had job stability taken from us. If Verizon is allowed to continue to destroy union jobs, we all suffer.

There are Verizon Wireless stores all across the country, and many DSA local chapters have already organized weekly pickets to stop customers from entering stores. Contact the DSA national office if you want to organize a picket. ❖

Contents	
Shaping a Post-election Multi-racial Politics	3
DSA ‘Berniecrat’ Runs for State Senate	5
Fire Starters for Socialism	6
Slow March to Surprising Victories.....	8
“The Debates”: Revolution or Evolution	10
Tours for Justice in Atlanta	11
Victory Against Fracked-Gas Pipeline	12
Trans-Pacific Partnership Battle	13
Remembering Bogdan Denitch.....	14
How to Hold a Film Showing	15

Cover art by Frank Reynoso

Shaping a Post-Election Multi-Racial Politics

By Joseph M. Schwartz

Bernie Sanders's campaign for president may have started a political revolution, but the question to consider well before Election Day is how to continue that revolution. The campaign arose out of popular rebellion against the bipartisan politics of austerity manifested in the Battle of Wisconsin, Occupy Wall Street, the low-wage justice movement, #BlackLivesMatter, and the immigrant rights' movement.

At this writing in mid-May, it's a fair bet that the campaign will focus its energy on platform fights at the Democratic convention in favor of a \$15 national minimum wage, single-payer health care, fair trade rather than free trade, public campaign finance, and a democratic and grassroots-funded Democratic Party. No matter who wins the nomination, these planks provide a benchmark against which to measure a candidate.

Start Now to Broaden the Sanders Movement

Political campaigns, particularly presidential ones, rarely yield ongoing grassroots political organization. That will be the responsibility of the activists and organizations that built the Sanders campaign at the local level. These local efforts will be greatly enhanced if the Sanders campaign shares its list of activists and donors with local organizers and if several of the key institutional players in the campaign (such as the Communication Workers of America, the National Nurses Union, and the Working Families Party) provide funding. But even if such resources are lacking, local Bernie activists, particularly those associated with the independent volunteer networks of People for Bernie and Labor for Bernie, should work to build local coalitions that can continue the "political revolution."

That is, the "Bernie current" in U.S. politics needs to be built primarily from the grassroots up and should focus primarily on state and local politics. Republican control of all three branches of govern-

ment in twenty-five states has had disastrous consequences for education funding, voting rights, labor rights, and reproductive justice. Fifty separate political systems exist in the United States; only if we build rainbow coalitions at the state and local

level, such as the Moral Monday movement in North Carolina, can the left match the political power that the right has built in the past forty years. The left needs to build the base for a multi-racial group of Bernies and Bernices running not just for Congress, but for school boards, city councils, and state legislatures.

Coalition Politics

These local coalitions must be more multi-racial in nature than the Sanders campaign itself. As labor and community activist Bill Fletcher argued in the Spring 2016 issue of *Democratic Left*, the Sanders campaign did not go boldly into black and Latino

community spaces, such as the church, and focus concerted attention on issues uniquely salient to those communities: an end to mass incarceration and police brutality and immigrants' rights. Sanders addressed these issues, but almost always in the context of his standard stump speech railing against the oligarchy's role in promoting socio-economic inequality. The Democratic Party elite remains pro-corporate and neo-liberal in its policy orientation, but communities of color understand that there are real differences between the two parties on voting rights, reproductive justice, labor rights, and immigrants' right. They've seen what Republican control of all three branches of state government has meant for working people and people of color in formerly Democratic states such as Wisconsin and Michigan.

Community activists in and around the Sanders campaign should start now to form local, post-election organizations or coalitions to first "Dump Trump" while simultaneously beginning to build political capacity independent of the Democratic Party establishment. Independent activist networks, as



Frank Reynoso

well as progressive unions and organizations such as Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) that backed Sanders from the start will also be key to such efforts. But such local efforts must move beyond the primary base of the Sanders movement among older white progressives and younger (somewhat more multi-racial) millennials. That is, the post-election trend must construct a multi-racial, majoritarian left and can only do so by tackling the intersectional nature of race, class, and gender injustice. To that end, Sanders activists should prioritize work as loyal allies in anti-racist struggles led by activists and organizations rooted in working-class and poor communities of color.

Labor and Community Organizations

Organized labor must also be central to such efforts, particularly as labor unions are often the only multi-racial institutions in a community. Unfortunately, not all union locals, even if affiliated with progressive internationals, are committed to democratic rank-and-file political mobilization. Those that are can play an invaluable role in progressive coalition politics.

To accomplish the above, post-election activists will have to accurately map the diverse nature of their potential allies and analyze the local power structure (including those Democratic Party elites opposed to radical change). This analysis must survey both mainstream and radical people-of-color organizations, taking into account the full range of diversity in generation, ideology, and class composition in such communities, as well as both the history of cooperation and tension between ethnic and racial groups in the community. Only by doing so can activists comprehend which groups have a mass base and will be the best partners for social change. The African-American led progressive coalitions that recently defeated conservative incumbents for district attorney in Cleveland and Chicago are prime examples of such multi-racial efforts.

Post-election Activism

Although DSA is growing rapidly because of Sanders's legitimation of democratic socialism and the attraction of millennials to socialism, we still have limited resources and must use them strategically. Our post-November priority is to build the ca-

capacity of our locals to engage in anti-racist coalition work for all of the reasons mentioned above.

This summer and fall DSAers will be focusing on two local campaigns that pre-figure the type of political efforts that can build a post-election left political current. DSA will work to elect DSAer Debbie Medina to the 18th district of the New York State Senate (the Bushwick and Williamsburg sections of Brooklyn) in the September New York Democratic primary. Medina, a veteran Puerto Rican activist and an explicit democratic socialist, is focusing her campaign on affordable housing, equitable public

education, and the fight for racial justice. (See interview on p. 5.) In North Carolina, our fledgling Piedmont Local is aiding political independent Eric Fink's run for the State Senate. Fink, a long-time DSA member and labor law professor at Elon University, is the sole opponent in District 26 to infamous Republican State Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger, a key proponent of the trans-phobic HB2 "bathroom bill." Fink's campaign aims to strengthen the multi-racial Moral Monday movement. (Also of note is left-leaning Tim Canova's campaign against Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz in Florida.)

This is the beginning of DSA's work to build a socialist trend in the streets and in electoral politics. Despite what mainstream pundits say, we *can* afford all that "free stuff" (also known as social rights), if we redistribute the income and wealth that the 1% have extracted from the 99%. In addition, socialists can best articulate that public investment can often be more productive than private capital. Only major public investments in nonprofit housing, alternative energy, mass transit, and infrastructure can create a sustainable, just society. Targeting these investments to address the racial wealth divide will necessitate building a socialist movement that is as diverse as the working class, a movement that values different cultures, is forthrightly anti-racist, and grounds its politics in mutual support and inter-racial solidarity. ❖

Joseph M. Schwartz is a professor of political science at Temple University and a National Vice-Chair of DSA. He is currently working on a book on the roots and revival of U.S. socialism.

“We can afford all that “free stuff” (also known as social rights), if we redistribute the income and wealth that the 1% have extracted from the 99%.”

DSA 'Berniecrat' Runs for State Senate

Candidate Debbie Medina talks with Jason Schulman

Brooklyn DSA member Debbie Medina is challenging New York State incumbent Democrat Martin Dilan in the 18th N.Y. senatorial district. Medina is out to “bring the political revolution to Brooklyn.” This interview with her was conducted via email in early May.

JS: What led you to decide to run for State Senate?

DM: Our movements around rent and education have been repeatedly frustrated by a regressive state legislature. I decided to challenge a business-backed Democrat because I believe that these fights are essential for taking power, passing urgently needed reforms, and building our movement.

JS: When and why did you determine that you were a democratic socialist?

DM: I come from a community with a deep tradition of socialism, going back to the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and for my adult life I have identified as a socialist.

JS: Why run for office openly as a socialist? And what does it mean to you to be a socialist?

DM: The essence of socialism, to me, is *community control*. It comes back to the community's ability to define its own destiny. To me, socialism is about expanding that community control until our government, our housing, and our *land* are truly socialized.

Bernie opened the door for running as a socialist. I think it marks me clearly as an ally to those who oppose capitalism and the damage it causes to our communities. I think it helps to unite a coalition behind me, and I am proud to wear the label.

JS: Socialists often argue among ourselves whether to run for office as Democrats or Greens or Independents. Why are you challenging Martin Dilan in the Democratic primary?

DM: Typically, in a presidential election year, about 10,000 people will vote in a State Senate Democratic primary in the 18th district and 70,000 will vote in the general election. We can look back at 2012 to see what happens here: over 90% of those general election voters have no idea who the

local candidates are. They are showing up to vote for president and voting for Democrats all the way down the ballot.

This means that I have 60,000 voters who were totally unreachable during the primary. To run as an independent, I would have to make the case that I could somehow reach this huge chunk of people despite a significant lack of resources. I hope this reality changes, but right now, it is a reality. I would be turning a winnable campaign into a borderline impossible one if I abandoned the Democratic primary.

I'm not here to waste everyone's time. I'm here to win an election, and *in this case* it is clear that



“I'm not here to waste everyone's time. I'm here to win an election.”

the way to do that is via a Democratic primary. This is very different from a Council race. When the

general election does not fall on the same day as a larger election, it is far easier to win outside of the Democratic Party, although still quite hard.

JS: What do you hope you can achieve if you win the general election?

Much like Kshama Sawant [openly socialist City Council member] in Seattle, I can use the resources of a state senator to strengthen organizing in the community. Through publicized hearings and a dedicated staff, I can provide venues around key, strategic issues (such as rent stabilization/rent control) where activists in the community can unite, recruit, and grow their ranks. The *elevation of the most radical, achievable movement demands* is an important goal of mine.

In the short term, I think that some of these goals are winnable. Strong and expanded rent control and rent stabilization can certainly be achieved this cycle. Finally, a win for me would pave the way for similar victories across the state—which is what we need if we're going to achieve much of anything. ❖

Jason Schulman is active in New York City DSA, serves on the editorial board of Democratic Left, and is co-editor of New Politics. He is the author of Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Fire Starters for Socialism

By David Walls

Millions of U.S. citizens have voted for self-proclaimed democratic socialist Bernie Sanders for president in the 2016 Democratic primary elections. As Harold Meyerson noted in the Spring 2016 *American Prospect*, “Sanders’s campaign didn’t create a new American left. It revealed it.” [<http://prospect.org/article/long-march-bernie’s-army>]

The absence of a strong socialist tradition in the United States was the result of brutal repression and the U.S. economy’s ability to improve living standards for the working class. But the rising inequality gap in income and wealth has made the European welfare states very attractive, and the end of the Cold War has dimmed ideological opposition to socialism.

With the presidential election a few months away, Sanders campaigners are asking what comes after the election. Other progressive presidential campaigns have attempted to build post-election movements. After 2008, Howard Dean’s supporters formed Democracy for America, Dennis Kucinich backers formed Progressive Democrats for America, and Barack Obama’s successful Obama for America became Organizing for America and recently Organizing for Action (and will become part of the Obama Foundation that raises money for his presidential library). They joined such previously formed groups as Wellstone Action (created to carry on the legacy of the late Minnesota senator Paul Wellstone) and MoveOn (formed as MoveOn.org at the time of the impeachment of President Bill Clinton).

Most of these groups were structured as PACs (Political Action Committees) and are run by small groups of self-perpetuating directors. By and large, they have done little to expand or build greater unity in the progressive movement at any level—local, state, or national. Most are disproportionately white, middle-class, and middle-aged. (I present my critique of MoveOn.org in the *Dissent* online symposium on organizing: <http://tinyurl.com/zlxqqt5>.)

For a model that has a chance to build a progressive movement, we must look to the example of institution-based community organizing (IBCO),

which has succeeded in deepening ties among progressive groups and expanding civic participation by poor and working-class people, union members, immigrants, and people of color. The broad tradition of community organizing developed from Saul Alinsky’s work has many branches, but all emphasize developing new leadership from under-represented communities and winning a real share of political power in the local city or metropolitan area. A majority of the 200 or so IBCOs participate in national networks—some representing primarily religious congregations (Industrial Areas Foundation, PICO National Network, Gamaliel Foundation), others secular organizations (National People’s Action network).

These people-power “organizations of organizations” tackle such issues from the progressive agenda as affordable housing and homelessness, education reform, transportation equity, criminal justice, and living-wage

campaigns. The networks are learning how to coordinate the work of their members to have an impact on state and national policy as well at the local level.

They can build on structures already in place to organize the base of a progressive movement that can elect not only a progressive president but also both houses of Congress. A strong democratic socialist current could help give the movement a transformative character that goes beyond liberal reforms. Other clusters of the social movement left, such as LeftRoots [<http://tinyurl.com/z93bhdm>], may also follow this strategy,

Activists who think of the Alinsky tradition of community organizing as the domain of older white male organizers haven’t kept up with changes in the field. A majority of organizing staff are now women and people of color. The “founders’ generation” of the networks is retiring, and their replacements better reflect the constituencies they work among. Gamaliel’s new director, Ana Garcia-Ashley, is the first woman of color (and first bilingual immigrant) to head one of the congregation-based networks. And Gamaliel groups have declared the elimination of structural racism as the foundation of all their work.

“A good organizer is a social arsonist who goes around setting people on fire.”

—Fred Ross



Rochester Area DSA supports Verizon workers.

Regardless of who wins the primaries and the general election, many socialists will be looking for an organizational home to continue the struggle to transform our social, economic, and political order. Some will no doubt be attracted to whatever is set up by Sanders campaign leaders. Others will want an explicitly socialist group that is active and exciting, but not dogmatic. If it chooses the strategy of building the local base for a movement of movements, DSA can be in the foreground of constructing a new strategic progressive alignment. By emphasizing training in organizing, DSA could offer valuable skills to its new members that can be applied in many settings from labor unions and political campaigns to issue-advocacy nonprofits. These groups have training programs in place. DSA can provide the socialist element.

DSA offers one big advantage over a new after-Bernie group: it has a functioning democratic structure, with an elected national political committee and a delegated convention every two years. That may not seem important at first, but it will.

The program is not particularly complex. Where the DSA group is in a city with an established community organizing group, it should try to join it. If there is no such group, it can begin the conversations to set one up. It can consider joining or launching a Jobs with Justice chapter. Although primarily concerned for labor support, JwJ brings together unions and community nonprofit advocacy groups in ways that draw on the community organizing tradition. Keep in mind that in this approach, member organizations do not lose their own identity,

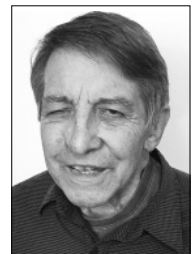
but rather gain allies who strengthen their power. If IBCOs rebuff socialist groups, consider forming or joining a “Friends of Community Organizing” (FOCO) group, which a number of IBCOs are trying as a way to recruit individual supporters. DSA members not affiliated with a DSA chapter might participate as a member of a union or a local environmental, immigrant rights, living wage or FOCO group that is part of the local IBCO.

Does DSA have the staff and resources to add an ambitious new project while expanding its chapter network quickly in response to post-Bernie campaigners? The national staff would need to be freed up to organize and coordinate work with volunteer field organizers drawn from experienced DSA members. DSA’s labor, socialist-feminist, people of color, and religion and socialism groups could add their expertise. The organization is undergoing a major growth spurt, and the need for skilled activists is acute no matter what path the organization takes.

What would be new would be for the executive director to set aside at least a day a week to meet with the executives of allies and potential allies. DSA has had good relations with labor, including unions already working with IBCOs, such as AFSCME, SEIU, UNITE HERE, IBEW, Communication Workers, and the Amalgamated Transit Workers. Contacts need to be strengthened with environmental, civil rights, immigrant rights, women’s and LGBTQ advocates. The deputy director would provide support and mentoring to the volunteer field staff through various means from weekly personal phone calls, monthly teleconferencing, and periodic face-to-face meetings. Both full-time national staff members would mentor the campus chapters and see that they are provided with one-day trainings run by DSA and opportunities to attend longer programs run by other organizations.

I’m not suggesting that all DSA members should become organizers, only that each chapter develop a core team whose members think like organizers and gain some experience. DSA can develop a new generation of radical fire starters, practical visionaries who can keep the flames of democracy and justice blazing, illuminating a twenty-first-century vision of democratic socialism. ❖

David Walls is emeritus professor of sociology at Sonoma State University. He is a co-founder of the North Bay Organizing Project and has served on its leadership council since 2010. His latest book is Community Organizing: Fanning the Flame of Democracy (Polity Books, 2015).



Books

Slow March to Surprising Victories

By Laura Tanenbaum

This Is an Uprising

By Mark and Paul Engler

Nation Books, 2016

Movements for change are unpopular. They're disruptive and discomfiting, and they face seemingly impossible odds against the institutions that seem to have all the power. Yet, as Mark and Paul Engler outline in their outstanding and important new book, *This Is an Uprising*, they often win. So much so, the authors argue, that opportunists often take credit for movements they opposed, while pundits write off hard-won victories as the inevitable result of progress. At the same time, cynics posing as "realists" are quick to declare that the movements won't be able to or have not changed anything—a charge, the authors point out, that has the advantage of not requiring any evidence. A serious evaluation of success is more difficult, not least because the most notable successes may come years after the headlines have dissipated. This is certainly the case with the Occupy movement: nearly five years after the encampments, the list of taxes on millionaires and minimum-wage increases—once nearly universally deemed "unrealistic"—continues to grow. [Full disclosure: I count Mark Engler as a friend and have shared ideas and contacts over the years with him but have never formally worked with him.]

The authors, brothers who are veterans of the labor, environmental, and immigrant rights movements, bring to the book a compelling mix of practical experience in the day-to-day of organizing, historical knowledge of a range of movements, and feeling for the experience of being a part of struggles for change. They write movingly of formative experiences in the Catholic Worker movement, a tradition that created communities that enabled people to make great personal sacrifices, including extended

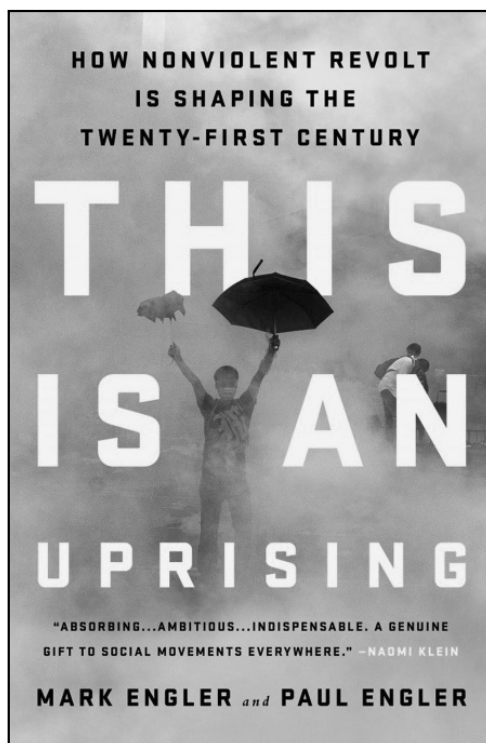
jail terms, in order to bear witness to the injustice of nuclear weapons. It was a tradition that resisted conventional definitions of success, as reflected in the popular saying "Jesus never told us to be successful, only to be faithful." Ultimately, however, most participants in movements do care about winning and figuring out the tools to be effective.

For activists just coming into a movement, everything can seem new. Often it feels as if something without precedent is taking place. Yet, nearly all movements for nonviolent change draw on two core traditions outlined in the book. On the one hand,

there is the tradition of structure-based organizing embodied in the work of civil rights organizer Ella Baker and community organizer Saul Alinsky. This tradition emphasizes building organizations with deep roots in communities and developing local leadership that can mobilize people for small, achievable demands that demonstrate the capacity to build power.

On the other hand, there is the tradition of mass mobilization and protest, embodied in the iconic marches of the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, theorized by Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, and carried on in mass uprisings around the world. Because these movements may be under the radar until they mobilize huge numbers, they can look like spontaneous eruptions that come from

nowhere. As a result, the lessons they have to teach about what made them possible are often obscured or forgotten. Moreover, activists in structure-based organizations often greet mass mobilizations with indifference or suspicion, arguing that they lack the staying power to make good on their initial promise. Fortunately, the authors argue, the post-Occupy moment benefits from both traditions, as many in unions and established organizations witnessed the movement's astounding success in changing the



conversation and those involved in the occupations looked for ways to sustain their activism after their evictions.

The Englers make arguments based on a range of examples. To those who believe that disruptive tactics are divisive and alienate those who might support the cause, they offer the story of ACT UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power), which was hugely unpopular for its confrontational tactics, but also hugely successful in demanding and obtaining research and services for people living with AIDS. They outline strategies for “positive polarization”—ways in which escalation, disruption, and sacrifice can shift the equation in favor of change. And to those who claim that only violent escalation is disruptive or “serious” enough, they make a compelling strategic argument for nonviolence. Setting the debate about the morality of violence aside, they draw on the example of the radical environmental group Earth First!, which became much more effective when it moved from sabotage to nonviolent resistance and local outreach.

Just as I thought about connections to the feminist movement I write about—wherein the mass media give a picture of national disdain for feminism, but a majority of people in the United States support core feminist demands such as equal pay—readers are invited to draw parallels to their own experiences.

Throughout the book, the Englers manage a difficult balance—articulating the differences between the structure-based organizing tradition and the tradition of mass mobilization so as to think constructively about how to bring the two together. In so doing, they also bridge the familiar divide between theory and practice. The book should appeal to activists and organizers who are weary of armchair theorizing but would like to think about the larger frameworks in which they operate. Understanding how structure-based and mass mobilizations can work together is a good antidote against the disillusionment, burnout, and sectarianism that often follows the waning of mass movements. And it offers the thrilling possibility that we can plan, create, and train for mass mobilizations, rather than just wait for them to “erupt.”

This is an optimistic book as well as a practical one, making it particularly timely at a moment when so many people are showing a renewed interest in socialism and in the progressive and radi-

cal traditions. If radical thinkers present a vision that the world can be different, organizers offer a vision of how we can bring that time just a little closer. In the final chapter, the Englers look at the difficult example of the Egyptian Revolution, examining how the divide between the structure offered by the Muslim Brotherhood and the mass mobilizations of the protesters in Tahir Square helped pave the way for counterrevolution and a return to military rule. Yet they end this story on a note of cautious optimism, quoting the exiled organizer Ahmed Salah: “what we did before, we can do again.”

Ultimately, however practical the analysis, the spirit of the Catholic Worker movement still runs through the book. There is an element of faith, whether religious or not, in the work of those who dedicate themselves to social movements. This becomes clear in the authors’ nuanced discussion of the controversial notion of prefiguration—the idea that the movement itself should embody the world it wants to create. As they note, the idea has often been asso-

ciated with a lifestyle politics that’s easy to mock. At the same time, by offering connection and vision, it is strategically important, sustaining activists to withstand challenges. Labor writer Thomas Geoghegan once called the labor movement “the real counterculture.” In an individualistic capitalist society, it’s considered irrational to spend time at political meetings and rallies instead of on personal pursuits, let alone to make the bigger sacrifices involved in going on strike or engaging in civil resistance. Movements change the equation by offering the promise of change but also by finding community and solidarity in the struggle. ❖

Laura Tanenbaum is an associate professor of English at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York. Her writing has appeared in a variety of publications including Jacobin, Dissent, Narrative, and Open Letters Monthly.



“Most participants in movements do care about winning and figuring out the tools to be effective.”

Help DSA take advantage of the opening to socialism. Donate now:
dsausa.org

Review

“The Debates”: Revolution or Evolution

By Maxine Phillips



“The Debates”

Created by Theater in Asylum and the cast
Director Paul Bedard / Choreographer Katie
Palmer / Lead Dramaturg Samantha Keogh
www.theaterinasyllum.com

“I think I finally understand Glass-Steagall,” my companion said as we left the Kraine Theater in the East Village on Primary Day in New York City. It was high praise for the performance we’d just seen, “The Debates,” by Theater in Asylum. Throughout the Democratic presidential debates, the troupe, created by DSAer Paul Bedard and Katie Palmer, had met with audiences to watch the debates and then talk about them. They assessed the candidates’ body language and teased out audience concerns about health care, electability, jobs, foreign policy, and taxes.

I hesitated about attending the performance. Was it possible to make interesting theater from debates that were less Theater of the Absurd than War of the Wonks? Did I really want to trek downtown after hours of handing out Bernie literature at subway stops to hear the stage Bernie say that he didn’t care about the “damn e-mails”? But once I’d wedged myself into a half-broken seat in the threadbare theater, the fatigue of the day subsided and I was entranced by an enthusiastic multi-media romp through the nine Democratic debates, with a few asides from Republican candidates thrown in.

Grainy footage played in the background as actors lip synced with the candidates in answer to questions. How high would Bernie raise taxes on the rich? Less than under Dwight D. Eisenhower. A “parade of dead presidents” crossed the stage, as the percentages of taxes under their administrations flashed on the screen, from a high of 94% under Franklin D. Roosevelt to a low of 28% under Ronald Reagan, settling in to 39.6% with the non-socialist Barack Obama.

Reminding the audience that “Before we’d ever heard of ISIS we had the 2008 Housing Crisis,” a news commentator asks how Bernie and Hillary

would deal with Wall Street and avoid another financial meltdown like that of 2008. A Bernie character urges “a working class revolution” while a Hillary character sings of “simply working to a solution.” Bernie wants to bring back Glass-Steagall, the regulatory legislation passed during the Great Depression and repealed in Bill Clinton’s administration that kept consumer banks from engaging in investment activities. Hillary prefers Dodd-Frank, the regulatory reform legislation passed in 2010. Actors tap dance in formation, reminiscent of escapist movies made during the Great Depression.

Even ironic levity ended when the troupe gathered on stage to talk about the Black Lives Matter movement and the prison-industrial complex. They pointed to Bill Clinton’s 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which has led to what Michelle Alexander calls “the new Jim Crow.” They read statements from Sanders opposing the bill and accurately predicting what would happen if it passed, but add that eventually Sanders voted for it. They quoted Hillary Clinton in 1994, saying “We need more prisons to keep violent offenders for as long as it takes to keep them off the streets” and juxtaposed it with her current statement that “One out of three African American men may well end up going to prison. . . . I want people here to think what we would be doing if it was one out of three white men.”

Woven throughout the vignettes are words from past audiences asking how one person can lead this diverse country, how democracy can best be served, whether we have a democracy, whether politics is a total bore.

It may be a bore for some, but it’s important, says the troupe, and at every performance actors urge audience members to register to vote, to vote, to debate, to be informed. At the end, they echo and refine a phrase: “Every debate is unabashedly an attempt to forge an identity.” Our identity as a country, they imply, will be shaped by this election. ❖

Maxine Phillips is editor of Democratic Left.

“The Debates” has been performed in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Connecticut, and New Jersey. You can bring it to your community. Find out more at theaterinasyllum.com.

Tours for Justice in Atlanta

By Brandon Payton-Carrillo

The large crowd of students, social activists, and community activists gathered eagerly at the Peoplestown Community Center in Atlanta, Georgia, on a Saturday in March. They were about to get on board for the annual Metro Atlanta DSA (MAD-SA) bus tour of “Resilience, Tenacity and Self-Determination in Peoplestown, Mechanicsville, Pittsburgh and Summerhill.” Designed to shine a light on inner-city Atlanta and the challenges faced by residents due to rapid gentrification, the tour is co-sponsored by longtime MAD-SA coalition partners Occupy Our Homes Atlanta (OOHA) and the Peoplestown Revitalization Corporation (PRC). Our tour guides of the evening were Tim Franzen of OOHA and Columbus Ward, president of the PRC.

First stop was the Stanton Oaks community in the Peoplestown neighborhood. Formerly called the Boynton Village Apartments, this facility was privately owned but heavily subsidized by the federal Housing and Urban Development agency. The owner of Stanton Oaks planned to let the property fall into such disrepair that at the end of the HUD contract the federal agency would not renew that agreement. This action would allow the owner to sell units at market rates and turn a taxpayer-subsidized profit.

Everything was going as planned until the tenants, led by Sherise Brown, created the Boynton Village Tenant Association. Once organized, they convinced the management to make the needed repairs to the property and to renew its HUD contract. No longer a blighted property, Stanton Oaks now includes a community center and a play area for children.

Next came the Rosa Burney Apartments. Located in the Mechanicsville neighborhood, this property looked more like a yellow brick prison in need of a facelift than a residence hall. As at Stanton Oaks, residents of Rosa Burney have fought to gain some

concessions. With its HUD contract coming up for renewal, the status of the building is still unclear. Deborah Arnold, president of the Rosa Burney Residents Association, vows to fight on to maintain affordable housing and end a rampant bedbug infestation.

In the Pittsburgh neighborhood, we found a once vibrant working-class community marred by boarded-up buildings and blight due to years of disinvestment by the city. In this environment, the “Peace by Piece House” was born.

The “Peace by Piece House” was donated to a group of activists dedicated to creating a meeting place for the community to organize. Built next to a city-owned community garden, the “Peace by Piece House” works to organize in the community with the aid of volunteers and the American Friends Service Committee.

Our final stop was at the residence of Georgia State University professor Tanya Washington in the Peoplestown neighborhood. Washington’s house and many others are on the

shortlist to be taken from her through eminent domain and demolished to make way for a pond and possibly student housing for Georgia State University. The removal of this housing would not only displace dozens of residents, but could possibly disrupt the growth the neighborhood has been experiencing.

As conceived by Georgia Tech professor emeritus and MADSA member Larry Keating, whose book on inner-city Atlanta—*Race, Class and Urban Expansion*—is a must-read, the tours are designed to show the resilience of communities targeted for destruction and make connections with other activists. ❖

Musician and writer Brandon Payton-Carrillo is a member of the DSA National Political Committee.



Photo by Reid Freeman Jenkins



Victory Against Fracked-Gas Pipeline Offers Local Organizing Model

By Becky Meier

In 2014, when Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline (SNYFGP) was formed, few thought we could beat energy giant Kinder Morgan's proposed three-billion-dollar Northeast Energy Direct (NED) natural-gas pipeline.

However, after two years of citizen activism against the project, which would have carried fracked gas from the Marcellus shale fields of Pennsylvania through New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, Kinder Morgan suspended it. The company blamed lack of customers, but the resistance of thousands of local residents undoubtedly played a large part. The day after NED was halted, New York State stopped the similar Constitution Pipeline by denying a required certificate.

Throughout New York State alone, activists and communities are fighting to stop oil and gas pipelines and other fossil fuel infrastructure such as the Pilgrim Pipeline, the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion, the Dominion New Market Project, the CPV Power Plant, the trains carrying oil called "Bomb Trains," and the proposal to use the Seneca Lake Salt Caverns to store fracked natural gas. These projects threaten local health, safety, and environmental quality as well as the global climate.

In the Kinder Morgan case, local residents were concerned about the risks of leaks and explosions; use of eminent domain for private profit; building new fossil fuel infrastructure instead of investing in renewable energy; the risks of contamination of local water bodies, including the Hudson River; drinking water contamination; headaches, rashes, and breathing difficulties associated with compressor stations; destruction of the rural character of their communities; lack of need for this project; disregard for local opinion; and the apparent rubber stamping approval of such projects.

SNYFGP started small, with a few neighbors who organized a local information meeting with a presentation by an active Massachusetts group. We then created our own PowerPoint presentation based on theirs and held informational forums in all the towns on the pipeline route. We met with the town boards in each community and with our U.S. representative and senators. We petitioned door

to door, telling neighbors about the pipeline. We joined many listservs to connect with other people and groups fighting to stop pipelines. We held press conferences and rallies locally and in the New York State capital, Albany.

In the beginning, we worried that we didn't "know enough" about the technical issues or the online platforms we needed to keep people informed. We found someone to create a basic website and learned just enough to keep it going. We figured out how to create a Facebook page, a GoFundMe page, a MailChimp account, an online petition, and a Twitter account. We kept hoping to find "experts" to help us with these, but never did. So we learned as we went, and we discovered that we had much talent and expertise within our community. Fortunately, our fear about not having enough expertise did not keep us from action.

Some 1,500 people joined our email list, and hundreds of people regularly attended our forums. We formed a sister group to fight fossil fuel infrastructure across New York State called United Against Fossil Fuels.

In March, we felt the tide shift in our favor. Five Rensselaer County towns, two in Albany County, and the Rensselaer County Legislature passed resolutions against the pipeline. Rensselaer and Albany counties both passed new restrictions on blasting. Our two U.S. senators and one representative filed statements in opposition to the pipeline with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which grants the construction permits for interstate gas projects, and several N.Y. State legislators came out publicly against the pipeline.

In April, Kinder Morgan suspended the project. SNYFGP will not stop working. It will continue to monitor what Kinder Morgan does with the NED as well as fight other New York fossil fuel infrastructure projects and work to create the clean energy systems and new jobs we need in order to leave all fossil fuels in the ground. ❖

Becky Meier, Co-founder of Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline, is a DSA member living in Canaan, N.Y., in the Hudson Valley.



“We learned as we went.”

Battle Against Trans-Pacific Partnership Can Be Won in Congress

By Susan DuBois

After years of secretive negotiations, Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiators reached an agreement in early October 2015. Despite a near-blackout of news about the trade agreement in the corporate media, many organizations across a broad spectrum of politics are opposing it and could still stop it.

The TPP trade agreement has been called “NAFTA on steroids” (referring to the disastrous North American Free Trade Agreement) and a “corporate coup against people and the planet.” It is one of three neoliberal trade agreements currently in the works. The TPP involves the United States, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam, although other countries could join later.

The other agreements are the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), between the United States and the European Union, and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) involving many nations. TTIP has faced major public opposition in Europe. TiSA is not as well known as the other two but is opposed by postal unions in the United States because it threatens to privatize the U.S. Postal Service.

Of these three, the TPP is closest to being approved. At this writing in mid-2016, opponents of the TPP are working to get members of Congress to commit to voting against it.

The TPP and similar deals go far beyond traditional trade issues such as tariffs, getting into many subject areas that normally would be governed by national laws. Among the TPP’s most damaging provisions is an investor-state dispute settlement process (ISDS) under which companies could sue governments for lost profits if the governments strengthen regulations or violate a vague minimum standard of treatment. Similar, but more limited, dispute processes in earlier trade deals have led

to repeal of U.S. country-of-origin labeling requirements for meat and a pending challenge to the disapproval of the Keystone pipeline.

Opponents have been working to alert their congressional representatives to the dangers of the TPP trade deal. Labor groups see the TPP as further facilitating export of jobs to low-wage countries; environmental groups anticipate attacks on environmental laws and energy policies under ISDS; Internet-freedom groups are alarmed by the TPP’s intellectual property chapter; and healthcare organizations see the TPP as imperiling both access to medications and progressive health care policies. Some right-wing groups oppose the TPP because they believe it threatens U.S. sovereignty, through ISDS and international bureaucracies. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and other legislators from tobacco-grow-

ing states have criticized the TPP because it would still allow other countries to adopt anti-smoking policies.

Although the TPP was signed by trade ministers in February 2016, allowing President Obama to start the fast-track process by sending implementation legislation to Congress, as of this writing he has declined to act. Many observers believe that he does not have the votes to pass it now and may wait until a “lame duck” session after the 2016 election.

The TPP has been in the news during the presidential campaign. Once the election is over, Congress will be freer to ignore the public, and the president-elect could change his/her position on the TPP. Now is the time to get your representative and senators publicly on record against the TPP. ❖

Susan DuBois is a retired public employee who lives in Albany, NY. She is active in the labor and peace movements.



Protesters rally at the Federal Building in Albany, N.Y.

Photo by Susan DuBois



Bogdan Denitch: 1929-2016

Ed. Note: *We at DSA were saddened to learn of the death in Croatia of DSA Honorary Chair Bogdan Denitch in late March. Denitch was one of the founding members of DSA and a tireless organizer. An immigrant from Yugoslavia, he joined the U.S. Young People's Socialist League at the age of 18 and was a proud democratic socialist until the day he died. Numerous tributes exist online, including at the DSA website. Below, Vice Chair Deborah Meier, who first met him in Chicago in the 1950s, recalls a larger-than-life persona.*

I think I was a rather new revolutionary socialist (even if we the used the term “revolution” rather differently than Bernie Sanders) when I met Bogdan. He was fun and preposterous. He was brilliant and unbelievable. He was charming and disarming. It was only after I spent some time with and without him in Yugoslavia that I found that his own real story was as impressive as any ones he ever made up. He may have, as some claimed, been an opportunist, but the politics he chose were hardly those of a social or political climber. (I also discovered that while he may have been hard of hearing, his booming voice was typical of Yugoslav men!) He stayed true to his convictions, took them seriously, and acted upon them in all the many years since

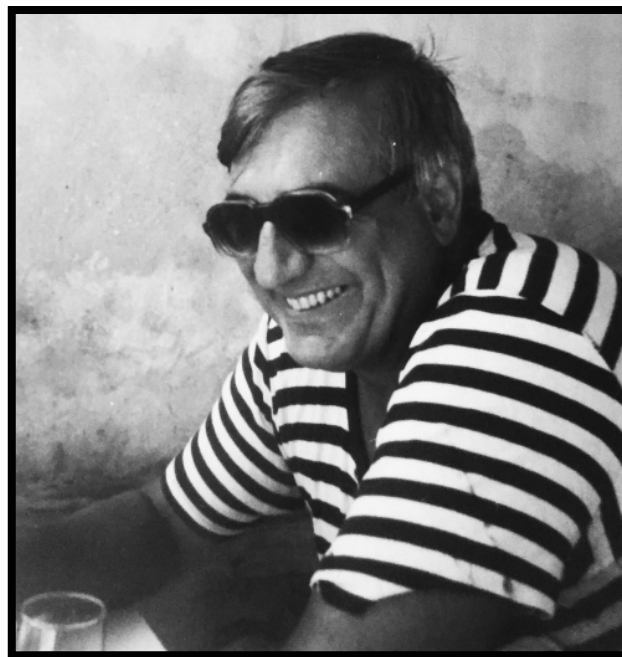


Photo by Jo-Ann Mori

we first met—probably close to 60 of them. I can't believe he isn't ready to argue with me as well as engage in some good-natured teasing. I shall miss him. He was a good man.

—Deborah Meier

Send Greetings to Democratic Left on Labor Day

Wish us well, pay tribute to a comrade or comrades, list your own labor blog, or advertise your book. This magazine is the public face of our organization. It is going into its 44th year of bringing you theory, practice, and just plain information about our movement. Let's keep it going and keep it strong. Send a check or donate online and specify that it is for *Democratic Left* and you'll see your name in the Labor Day issue.

Don't delay. Deadline for copy is July 5.

NAME ONLY

Reader: \$20 ___

Supporter: \$40 ___

Sustainer: \$60 ___

Booster: \$80 ___

Cadre: \$100 ___

ADS

One-eighth page: \$125 ___

Quarter-page: \$250 ___

Half-page: \$500 ___

Full page: \$1,000 ___

Inside front or back cover: \$1,100 ___

Email your copy to mstart@dsausa.org and mail your check to Editor, *Democratic Left*, Suite 702, 75 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038. If you are advertising a service or product, the cost may be tax deductible to you as a business expense.

How to Hold a Film Showing

By Glenn Scott

When DSA's Feminist Working Group (FWG) launched a fundraising campaign to expand abortion access for low-income women via Abortion Bowl-a-thons, Austin DSA decided to combine the bowl-a-thon with a showing of "She's Beautiful When She's Angry," a recent documentary about the U.S. women's liberation movement from 1960 to 1971.

Some 70 people attended the film showing, which was both the chapter's first public feminist event and one of the largest actions the chapter has sponsored since being chartered in the fall of 2014. What follows are components of what made the event a success:

1. Get buy-in. FWG member Alice Embree proposed the event to Austin DSA and got unanimous support. She signed up at least nine volunteers at the meeting.

2. Set up a planning committee. We established a committee of DSA bowling team members and others. We purposefully recruited young women, both in and outside DSA, to work on this event. The committee divided up tasks. One member enlisted her church to approve hosting the event at a central location with free parking. Other members distributed flyers around the University of Texas, the community college, bookstores, and coffee houses. We also flyered at several feminist events.

3. Use social media. One young ally on our committee set up a Facebook event page and we each invited our FB friends. By five days out, we had thirty-five committed. Another young member set up a Meetup announcement on the documentary fan club site. Our DSA co-chairs put out an email invite to all members of DSA, and all planning committee members sent out emails to their networks.

4. Coordinate with allies. We connected to the Lilith Fund of Austin, which would receive the funds. One of our committee, Meaghan Perkins (new DSA member) invited Rosann Mariapurnam, a Lilith Fund board member, to speak at the event. Mariapurnam made clear the daunting barriers women in Texas face in obtaining legal abortions and the pressing need for contributions.

5. Keep track of details. Alice rode herd on

all the logistical details from food, flyers, projector, signs at event, screen, set up, thank-you notes, and crediting the funds to the fundraising site.

6. Remind people more than once. We sent reminders to FB invitees, emails, and texts, in the three days leading up to the event. Almost 40% of the Facebook confirms attended, which is a very high percentage.

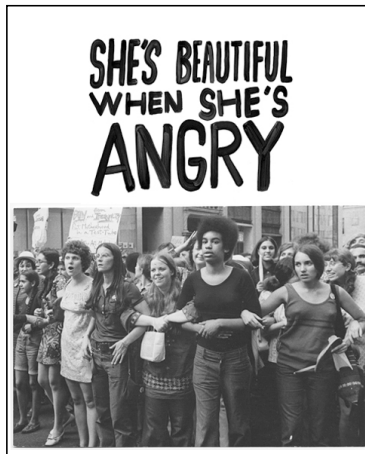
7. Promote DSA. At the event, Alice and I both acknowledged DSA as the sponsor. Co-chair Allison Behr was at the sign-in table. Co-chair Danny Fetonte talked with people about membership after they signed in. Alice talked about DSA's national effort on abortion access. I did a brief introduction and brought the planning committee up front so that people could see that we were intergenerational.

8. Leverage the event. Thanks to our emails and online fundraising in addition to the film showing, we tripled our initial \$500 fundraising goal by the date of our bowl-a-thon.

DSA fielded two teams, each made up of young people. Older DSA members and allies were the cheering squad. Our committee brought a DSA banner, pompoms, kazoos, and costumes. Committee member Taylor Borgfeldt brought "Design your own Fallopian Fans" with a fallopian tubes graphic, markers, glue, and glitter.

We have established DSA as a strong ally on abortion access. Four new members joined DSA during our campaign. Several more are interested in working with us. In addition, we now have a core group for a DSA feminist committee to do ongoing work.

Glenn Scott, a longtime union organizer and feminist activist, is a member of Austin DSA.



A Film About Early Women's Liberation

If your chapter or organizing committee wishes to sponsor a showing of "She's Beautiful When She's Angry," email DSA at info@dsausa.org. DSA has negotiated a special educational rate for its affiliates.

Democratic Left

(ISSN 1643207) is published quarterly at 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702, New York, NY 10038. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY (Publication No. 701-960). Subscriptions: \$10 regular; \$15 institutional. Postmaster: Send address changes to 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702, New York, NY 10038. Democratic Left is published by the Democratic Socialists of America, 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702, New York, NY 10038. (212) 727-8610. Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the organization.

Executive Editor: Maria Svart

Editor: Maxine Phillips

Blog Editors: Duane Campbell, Dustin Guastella, Elizabeth Henderson, Simone Morgen, and Barbara Joye

Editorial Committee: Michael Baker, Elizabeth Henderson, Michael Hirsch, Barbara Joye

Editorial Advisory Committee: Duane Campbell, Jeffrey Gold, José Gutierrez, Frank Llewellyn, Simone Morgen, Mark Schaeffer, Jason Schulman, Joseph Schwartz, Jack Suria-Linares, Lawrence Ware

Founding Editor: Michael Harrington (1928-1989)

Production: Ed Hedemann

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.

Change the USA! Join the DSA!

- Yes, I want to join the Democratic Socialists of America. Enclosed are my dues (includes a subscription to *Democratic Left*) of
 - \$150 Sustainer \$95 Family \$40 Introductory \$20 Low-Income/Student
- Yes, I want to renew my membership in DSA. Enclosed are my renewal dues of
 - \$150 Sustainer \$95 Family \$50 Regular \$25 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.

Name _____ Year of Birth _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____

Union Affiliation _____ School _____

Bill my credit card: Circle one: MC Visa No. ____/____/____/____

Expiration Date ____/____/____ Signature _____
month year

My interests are:

- Labor
- Religion
- Youth
- Anti-Racism
- Feminism
- LGBTQI Rights
- International
- Environmental Justice
- Other _____

RETURN TO Democratic Socialists of America

75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702
New York, NY 10038
212-727-8610
info@dsausa.org
www.dsausa.org