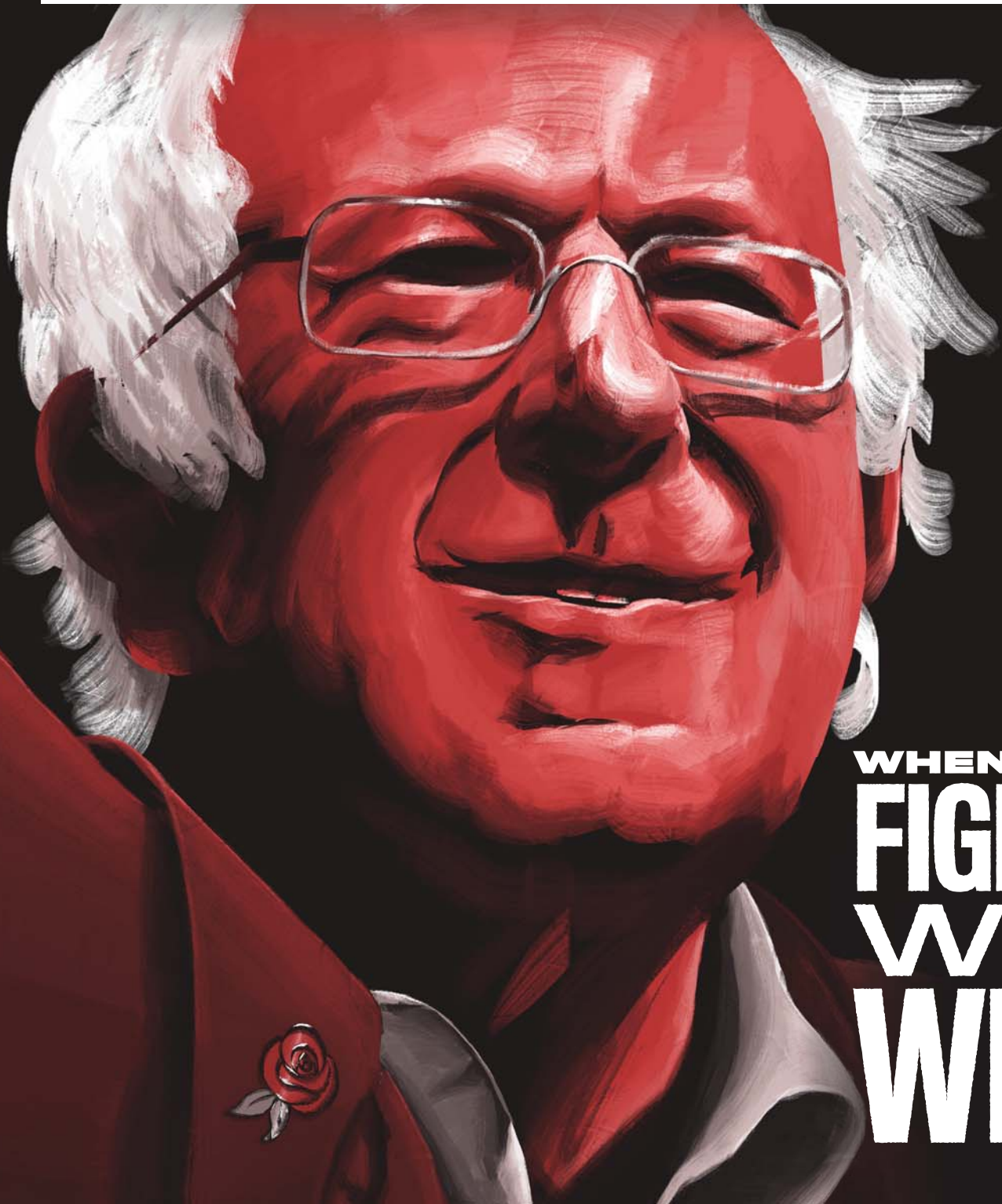


DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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WHEN WE
FIGHT
WE
WIN

From the National Director

Looking with hope to 2020

BY MARIA SVART

We have been living under the Donald Trump regime for three years. Our skyrocketing membership growth the instant Trump declared victory, the mass protests embodied by the Women's March, and the airport protests are behind us. At this point, people are tired.



Trump has appointed one in every four judges on federal courts of appeals and there is a reactionary majority on the Supreme Court. In addition, Trump has a massive war chest and is building an independent communications empire to speak to his millions of supporters directly and use big data to shape their perceptions of reality. This helps him mobilize his base in the other formal arena of power—elections. We cannot rely alone on the impeachment strategy being pursued by congressional Democrats.

Fortunately, we don't have to.

Although protesters who might show up at the National Mall in Washington, DC, may be exhausted, the surge in workers striking in their workplaces is still going strong and involves building power in our own communities rather than simply watching hearings unfold inside the beltway. In 2018, nearly 500,000 people struck, the highest since the mid-1980s. In 2019, it wasn't just high-profile, victorious teacher strikes in Democratic strongholds such as Los Angeles and Chicago, it was also nurses in Ohio, grocery workers from Massachusetts to Oregon, locomotive workers in Pennsylvania, mineworkers

in Arizona, and autoworkers across the country.

The rise in strikes is critical because it blocks the profits of the owning class, and because they teach us our own power when we do so.

DSA has grown because, in the face of Trump's 2016 victory, people wanted an alternative to the neoliberalism of establishment Democrats. We are a vehicle for collective struggle, and we understand the value of strikes, while still understanding the value of contesting for political power. And we understand the limitations of the courts.

Last month, we helped elect 20 locally or nationally endorsed candidates to office, from Knoxville, Tennessee, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Our total is more than 100. We're building the pipeline of experienced elected officials and the capacity of our chapters to do electoral work. This is how we will get more folks on "the Squad" with DSA Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, and how we will do it without relying on the mercenary campaign consultants who charge big bucks for stale advice.

Throughout 2019, DSAers led or supported struggles in our workplaces and communities, from joining picket lines at General Motors plants or Stop & Shop stores to helping raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for the students of striking teachers, organizing against Amazon's tech contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or closed-door deals to secure tax breaks from local governments, and confronting landlords, whether a local slumlord or the multi-national Blackstone Group.

As we look ahead to an all-important election year, I take hope not just from our DSA for Bernie campaign, but from the

work of our Ecosocialist Working Group, which has reached out to United Auto Workers members to build solidarity and ties between the environmental and labor movements. I take hope from our Immigrant Rights Working Group, which links immigrant-bashing at home to our government's foreign policy under both Republicans and Democrats that has done so much to turn the "pink tide" in Latin America. They are but two examples of how we keep one foot in the electoral arena and one out; how we bring together struggles across issues and across countries, how we build the unity we need if we're to transform our world.

In this issue of *Democratic Left*, we take a closer look at some of our work in the coming period. Cecilia Gingerich surveys the top-polling Democratic candidates on the question of child care, while Cari Luna describes the Portland DSA campaign for free universal pre-K paid for by, yes, taxing the rich. Peter Dreier looks at the housing crisis and advocates for a national renters' movement, while Christine Lombardi highlights books for your housing-advocacy bookshelf. Alec Ramsay-Smith tells why we're for Bernie Sanders, and Marlin Foreman describes on-the-ground canvassing for Bernie. Charles Du asks what it would take to build a more multiracial DSA, and Ariel Zakarison writes about security training for chapters through our national Red Rabbits team. Don McIntosh surveys local chapter successes.

And take note: If you donate, join for the first time, or renew your DSA membership December 17-31, we'll send you a Housing is a Human Right union-printed sticker! ■

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Democratic Socialists of America promotes 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 people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements—of unions, environmentalists, feminists, and people of color—which together can elevate global justice over brutalizing global competition.

Building DSA with Bernie

Our goal isn't just to get Bernie elected. It's to strengthen DSA and our side of the class struggle.

BY ALEC RAMSAY-SMITH

Bernie Sanders is the first viable national candidate in living memory who identifies as a democratic socialist, and his campaign has already mobilized masses of working people. By endorsing Sanders, DSA committed to playing a key role on the national stage. Rather than limit ourselves to funneling volunteers to Sanders field offices, we launched an Independent Expenditure (IE) campaign to go toe-to-toe with the right wing and corporate Democrats. The IE gives DSA the ability to set its own strategy and dedicate its full resources to the cause as long as it does not coordinate with the campaign.

DSA may lack the resources to buy equal airtime with millionaires and billionaires, but we have a nationwide network of more than 55,000 committed socialists. Chapters have already started tabling and canvassing door-to-door in working-class neighborhoods to contact potential voters (see story on p. 4), and many have sponsored debate-watch parties and other events to grow their core of activists. The goal of each conversa-

Ten actions for President Sanders on Day One

Executive orders are powerful tools for presidents, who often issue hundreds of them for both good and ill. They can be reversed or opposed in the courts, but they can open up space for action. Here's a very short list of executive orders that a President Sanders could issue on his first day in office.

- Set aggressive greenhouse gas and energy use reduction goals across the federal government, including the military.
- Establish an interagency task force to lay out the parameters of a Green New Deal.
- Stop all lease sales for coal, oil and gas extraction, uranium mining, and other forms of mining and logging on federal land and bar any company with environmental violations in the last ten years from federal contracts.
- Bring the troops home.
- Shutter federal private prisons completely, including immigrant detention centers, and cut all contracts with private prison companies.
- Direct the Department of Justice to abandon mandatory minimum sentences in federal prosecution and to pursue non-carceral solutions for low-level offenders.
- Direct the U.S. Postal Service to begin offering public banking.
- Establish a task force to determine the real living wage across the United States and set the federal worker minimum accordingly.
- Direct the secretary of education to immediately write off all student loan debt for which the federal government is the creditor.
- Revoke the "global gag rule" prohibiting aid to foreign groups that promote or provide abortion services.

These items are adapted and augmented from a longer article by Meagan Day that appeared in Jacobin entitled, "Here's What Bernie Could Do in Power."—Ed.

tion is to engage people on their issues, ask them to pledge to support Bernie in the primary, and bring them into DSA.

The campaign has kicked off monthly Weeks of Action to generate excitement and lift up the campaign's socialist demands. We must also seize this moment to organize and expand our movement. To grow DSA's power as a membership-driven organization, chapters will need to identify and recruit leaders into the work, develop their members' strategic campaign skills, and sign up Bernie's multiracial and working-class base as DSA members. Current at-large members can host Bernie house parties and use them to assemble organizing committees and

form new chapters. If we do it right, DSA will end this campaign larger and stronger than ever before.

DSA is going to win this campaign, not because we have the best ideas, but because we out-organize everyone else. And with a class-struggle candidate in Bernie Sanders, we are ready to build toward becoming the mass movement we need. ■

Alec Ramsay-Smith is the campaign manager for the DSA for Bernie IE and a member of Central Connecticut DSA. You can reach him at alec@dsausa.org.

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Steve Eberhardt

What I learned canvassing for Bernie

Corporate media slanders his base as millennial Bernie bros. A Philly canvass shows how wrong that is.

BY MARLIN FOREMAN

Germanatown—a working-class, primarily African American Northwest Philadelphia neighborhood far from the skyscrapers of Center City—might look like the wrong place to canvass for Bernie Sanders. It’s filled with modest rowhomes and small, family-run storefronts, and if Philly DSA had listened to the media pundits who say that Bernie’s name doesn’t resonate in such neighborhoods, we’d have chosen to canvass on one of Philly’s many college campuses or scouted one of our city’s trendy, rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods.

But recent data show that just the opposite of the corporate narrative is true. That is, a neighborhood like Germanatown, its residents mostly non-white, with an average income below \$30,000 per year, is exactly where we’d find Bernie’s base.

And find it we did. On an August day, as my canvass partner and I walked toward our turf, a passing driver rolled his window down to ask us what the clipboards were for. We shouted back, “Bernie Sanders!” He quickly crossed a lane of traffic to pull into a driveway

next to us, leaped out of the car and said, “Sign me up!”

Still, we couldn’t expect all of Bernie’s admirers to come to us that way, so we began door knocking. The first person we made contact with was a woman of about 50. With the door just barely cracked, she asked why we’d come to her home. As soon as we told her, everything changed. The door swung wide open. “I love Bernie Sanders!” she said. She happily wrote down her information for us and took several copies of our campaign literature, which she told us she’d use to help her friends and family understand the importance of supporting a leader like Bernie, who is “for the people.”

At house after house, we heard positive feedback about Bernie and his agenda. But an interaction near the end of our route made the biggest impact on us. A middle-aged woman began to talk to us about Sanders’s Medicare for All legislation. She shared with us her heartbreaking personal story of losing a 24-year-old daughter to cancer. Her grief went beyond anything that could be addressed with a political agenda, but she also felt a sense of outrage at having to spend so much of her daughter’s final months on the phone arguing with insurance adjusters. She also wondered if her daughter might still be with her if we had a healthcare system that didn’t prioritize the health of those with the most money.

Her story helped illustrate why the people we’d been talking to all day had a different take from the one you’ll hear on cable news or any major newspaper’s opinion page. Bernie’s Medicare for All legislation has gone from being a fringe policy proposal to a wildly popular plan copied by other Democratic contenders.

In Philadelphia, the issue is achingly real. Hahnemann Hospital—a community hospital that serves tens of thousands of Philadelphians every year—is at risk of becoming the latest victim of our for-profit healthcare system, as venture capitalists seek to liquidate its assets and turn the land into luxury housing. As a community coalition rose up in opposition to this sleazy scheme, Bernie was the only 2020 candidate to show up and amplify our struggle.

The residents we spoke with in Germanatown on that sweltering Saturday afternoon gave us such overwhelmingly positive feedback because they know that we need real change on behalf of working Americans. And they believe Bernie Sanders is leading a movement to deliver it. ■

Marlin Foreman is a public policy student at Temple University and a member of Philadelphia DSA.

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How to build a multiracial DSA

DSA needs to root itself in the multiracial working class. That means building coalitions.

BY CHARLES DU

The “race and class” question has always been a vexing one for the U.S. Left, and today the stakes are even higher—because of the strategic deployment of antiracist rhetoric by establishment Democrats and the open white supremacy of Donald Trump and the far Right. Within DSA, many members feel that our organization is “too white,” a shorthand that includes many different diagnoses of and solutions to the problem. And although DSA members of color have striven to achieve a nuanced balance between developing separate networks (such as the Afrosocialists and Socialists of Color Caucus) and involving themselves in the general work of their chapters, these efforts have not yet brought working-class people of color into the organization at the scale needed to qualitatively change the makeup of DSA.

In developing a coherent approach to addressing this issue, it can help us to go back to the basics. We know that socialism will only be achieved through a mass movement of the multiracial working class. DSA’s explosive upsurge to more than 55,000 members is a promising indication of the potential of left politics in this period of economic, social, and ecological crisis. Yet our continued growth is not guaranteed, because it has been a phenomenon of the historical moment spurred by events largely external

to the organization: Bernie Sanders’s campaigns, Trump’s presidency, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s victory. If DSA is to become a historical force in its own right, we must make the transition from a self-selected group to a truly mass organization capable of organizing all parts of the multiracial working class.

The question, then, is, “How should DSA chapters work in communities with which our current membership lacks strong organic connections?” DSA cannot and should not attempt to impose a program or agenda where its members would be perceived as outsiders. Yet our goal must be to eventually grow our membership and influence in every neighborhood in the United States.

Coalition work

One strategy is to join or launch campaigns responsive to local conditions that bring DSA chapters into coalition with allied left organizations led by working-class people of color. This approach respects deeply rooted political organizing already occurring on issues important to DSA while laying the foundation for building long-term personal relationships between our members and those of other left organizations. Engaging at the organizational level, rather than attempting to recruit unaffiliated individuals one by one, is also essential for establishing DSA’s institutional legitimacy and achieving the scale necessary for the socialist project.

Local chapters are already applying this methodology with success. Austin DSA joined a successful campaign to pass a \$250 million bond for afford-

able housing alongside groups like the Austin Justice Coalition, a “community organization that focuses on improving the quality of life for people who are Black, Brown, and poor.” The chapter focused its canvassing in working class neighborhoods, which were disproportionately made up of people of color. As Tandra Louie, a member of Austin DSA, explained: “There have always been people doing the work, especially in black and Mexican communities here in Texas. So, instead of always having to take the lead, we coordinate and organize with other like-minded groups.”

In Los Angeles, when longtime leftist and DSA member Jackie Goldberg ran for a seat on the Los Angeles United School District Board of Education, the local chapter partnered with Eastside Padres Contra la Privatización, an all-volunteer group that self-organized to fight charter school expansion in East LA and Boyle Heights. Together, DSA-LA and Eastside Padres canvassed for Goldberg in neighborhoods typically neglected by electoral campaigns: communities of color in which the vast majority of residents are immigrants. “It’s important for our credibility and effectiveness to establish the expectation that intentional relationship building is what DSA does,” said Francisco Cendejas, a DSA-LA member. “Why unilaterally send our canvassers somewhere we haven’t been when we have the better option of partnering with good allies?” In both of these examples, coalitions formed around discrete campaigns deepened relationships between DSA and organizations rooted in the multiracial working class, opening up possibilities for future collaboration and mutual growth. There is, of course, no one-size-fits-all formula for successful multiracial organizing. Each chapter will have to adapt itself to its social and political context. But one principle will always hold true: DSA is at its best when it engages in the difficult and humbling undertaking of building alliances with others. If we commit ourselves to this work, we may someday find ourselves and our world transformed. ■

Charles Du is a member of the Los Angeles DSA steering committee and DSA’s Afrosocialist caucus.



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Walk, Rabbit, Walk

Protecting the Left nonviolently



William Matejski

At a 2018 May Day march in lower Manhattan, Red Rabbit marshals face a line of police.

As our profile increases, so do violent provocations. DSA's Red Rabbits are taking both security and nonviolence seriously.

BY ARIEL ZAKARISON

In the United States, class war has long been more than a metaphor. Government agents and capitalist hirelings regularly assaulted striking workers and broke up left-wing meetings (such as at Homestead, Ludlow, or Haymarket). Threats have come from the Left as well as the Right, such as “lefter-than-thou” groups rushing a stage to beat up other leftists or interrupting meetings and attempting to humiliate our comrades. In October, a comrade in the Kansas City DSA chapter was assaulted by members of the Red Guard who attempted to disrupt a meeting and instigate a violent altercation. The attack sent the comrade who stood up to them to the hospital.

With a resurgence of interest in democratic socialism, we are seeing a

resurgence of right-wing and left-wing provocations, and we will never know for sure how much of it is fueled by the state. What we do know is that we can resist nonviolently and help protect each other and our comrades in various movements.

Modern-day assaults on leftists range from actual physical violence (think Charlottesville) to doxxing, meeting disruption, or harassment from armed and unarmed counter-protesters. Often the goal of an aggressor is to cause their target to “throw the first punch,” in an attempt to paint leftists as violent or bellicose. DSA has responded to such threats by forming a nonviolent resistance team called the Red Rabbits to train DSA members in de-escalation tactics and to provide marshals for public events.

The Red Rabbits was formed in 2017 when several comrades in New York City saw that we needed a trained team of protest marshals with a clear communication structure to ensure that event attendees and organizers could make decisions and quickly transmit information to keep one another safe and out

of the hands of the police in emergent situations. Two former members of ACT-UP (an activist group working to end the AIDS pandemic) trained a large group of NYC-DSA members, and we took what we learned from this training (as well as several other sources) to develop our own curriculum.

We focused on info security, meeting security, and jail support. We recruited members from working groups and branches across the chapter, conducted monthly trainings, and worked with any groups in NYC-DSA that needed marshals for meetings or street actions. The name Red Rabbits builds on a reference in the allegorical *Watership Down* by Richard Adams, in which the creator of the world says to the rabbit leader, “Be cunning and full of tricks and your people shall never be destroyed.”

Our goal was to outsmart and outmaneuver opposition from all quarters, to pay attention and recognize threats early so that we would have time to react. Red Rabbits helps keep our spaces safe and accessible and helps comrades carry off successful street actions and events. We use de-escalation as a means to pre-

vent violence, harassment, or unwanted disruption, and we use structured communication between members of the security team and event organizers and participants to make sure that all goes smoothly.

Often, we put ourselves between participants in actions or marches and the police, so that our membership can avoid interacting with them and neither side can escalate the situation. We make an effort to know the laws around public assembly in our specific municipalities or states so that we can best inform our membership of what risks they are taking during civil disobedience or street actions. We try to help our comrades with mobility issues or with children participate in rallies and marches, as well as look out for possible accessibility issues in case of emergencies in our meeting spaces. Our role is not to enforce rules or laws but to communicate with our members so that they can make the best decisions for themselves as members of a collective. For example, when we learned of a right-wing rally being held outside the 2019 DSA National Convention, the Red Rabbits asked convention delegates to avoid engaging with the Trump-supporting protesters. The protesters became frustrated that no one was confronting them and left without incident.

A training by the Red Rabbits National Working Group covers the following points for any meeting or action:

- De-escalation
- Preparatory scouting of the site (Where will the banner drop take place? Is there cell phone service? Can people be boxed in or “kettled”?)
- Contingency planning
- Determining a threat matrix (what are possible threats, and how bad would they be if they were to occur?)
- Creating systems so that participants can get to or from an event or action safely (the buddy system or leaving in pairs, organizing escorts to get groups to or from an action or event)
- How to interact with police, if necessary (minimize communication, de-escalate and avoid arrests of vulnerable individuals)
- What to do in the event of an unwanted disruption
- Jail support (have information on emergency contacts before an action for those who may face an arrest risk, know who needs medication or



pet care, organize a group to wait at the location where comrades are being detained to meet them and get them home when they are released, create a bail fund)

We are constantly revising and expanding our trainings and hope to increase the number of comrades who participate in the national Red Rabbits Working Group. We offer basic as well as more advanced training depending on the needs of chapters requesting the trainings.

Many smaller chapters do not have the capacity to have a separate team solely devoted to security, and so having a handful of active members who can play a dual role may be the best option in some areas. On the other hand, some larger chapters may be able to use their marshal team to give security support to actions organized by coalition partners, in order to build solidarity across the left in a given community. For example, the Red Rabbits team in New York works frequently with immigration-justice-focused groups in our community to help marshal direct actions or street actions that may include undocumented participants. Through de-escalation and other means we can decrease the number of interactions these participants have with the police.

If a chapter does not have the numbers or resources to set up a designated security team, individual members of chapters or working groups can benefit from training in de-escalation techniques and basic physical and info security practices and protocols.

All of us have been shaped by the oppression of capitalism as well as other oppressions related to race, class, and gender. It is no surprise, then, that every

“Be cunning and full of tricks, and your people shall never be destroyed.”

— Richard Adams,
Watership Down

social change movement has people in it with differing beliefs about tactics and strategies. These beliefs can lead to high emotions and conflict within our own spaces in DSA and between DSA and other groups on the Left. Because capitalism aims to divide us, we need to work together and stay in dialogue. Having comrades who are trained in de-escalation in our spaces can help keep things comradely.

Red Rabbits does not claim to have answers to all security issues or concerns. What we hope to do is share our knowledge with other chapters or members. The more information we can gather on what works for certain chapters and not for others or how chapters or groups are managing risks and threats, the stronger we can be as an organization, both online and off. The more comrades who are aware of security and have an eye out to protect one another, the stronger we will be in the fight for socialism and for a future that is led by the working class.

To start a Red Rabbits team in your chapter or area or to get information about upcoming trainings, please email security@dsausa.org ■

Ariel Zakarison has been an active member of NYC-DSA since January 2017 and currently focuses her organizing on protest/street marshaling and security with both the NYC and national Red Rabbits teams.

Grow DSA!

If each member recruits another person, we will surpass 100,000.

Universal Child Care

It means different things to different candidates

Once-radical ideas are being taken up by Democratic presidential candidates.

BY CECILIA GINGERICH

A resolution on child care passed at DSA's national convention in August 2019. It prioritized the fight for guaranteed paid parental leave and public universal child care and pre-school and specified that no candidate would receive a national endorsement who did not back these policies. As the spotlight narrows on the Democratic presidential hopefuls polling above 1% at the time of this writing—Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, Pete Buttigieg, Kamala Harris, Andrew Yang, Amy Klobuchar, and Cory Booker—it's important to know where the candidates stand on these crucial policies.

Policy highlights

Not surprisingly, Bernie Sanders, who has been endorsed by DSA, supports paid parental leave, public universal child care, and public universal pre-K. However, the remaining candidates' platforms vary.

All support some version of paid parental leave, which is often contained in broader legislative proposals covering paid family and medical leave. Sanders, Booker, Buttigieg, Warren, and Klobuchar endorsed Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Representative Rosa DeLauro's (D-CT) 2019 FAMILY Act, which provides parents and caregivers 12 weeks of paid leave at 66% of their wages.

Harris also supports the FAMILY Act, but recently revealed a more ambitious paid parental leave plan as part of her Children's Agenda. It proposes six months of paid family and medical leave, guaranteed to all workers. Only Yang has said he supports more leave—six months for single parents and nine if shared between two parents—though his proposal lacks details.

More comprehensive, Harris's Children's Agenda also includes expanded pre-K for three- and four-year-olds.

The policy claims to provide “universal access” but cites support for the Child Care for Working Families Act of 2019, which suggests incentives and funding for states to provide high-quality day-time preschool programs for three- and four-year-olds from low- and moderate-income households. Families earning under 150% of the state median income wouldn't pay more than 7% percent of their income for child care, and families under 75% of the state median wouldn't pay at all.

As the name implies, the Child Care for Working Families Act also aims to expand available child care for infants and toddlers from birth to age three using a similar mechanism. Incentives and funding would be given to states to provide child care programs for this age group, though at a higher matching rate, because younger children require

All candidates support some version of paid parental leave, but the versions vary considerably.

higher staffing ratios. Booker, Harris, Klobuchar, Sanders, and Warren are co-sponsors of the legislation.

Expanding pre-K is also generally popular, even among some of the least progressive candidates. Biden, for instance, says that he supports a universal pre-K program that is free for all.

Surprisingly, Warren's pre-K program proposal is not free for all. Instead, it is part of a child care program for children from birth to age five outlined in her 2019 Universal Child Care and Early Learning Act. Like the Child Care for Working Families Act, the bill focuses on expanding the availability of child care and early education and making it more affordable for lower income families. It also aims to address the lack

of child care options in many areas by calling for the federal government to partner with local entities to “create a network of child care options for families, including child care centers and smaller family daycare homes.” Booker was a cosponsor of the bill.

Klobuchar has also introduced legislation to address the shortage of affordable, quality child care. The Child Care Workforce and Facilities Act of 2019 suggests offering grants to expand the number of child care providers in “child care deserts” and increase education, training, and retention of the child care workforce.

Beyond campaign rhetoric

Lack of paid parental leave and public universal child care and preschool creates a significant burden for millions in the United States, and any improvements to the current inadequate system should be encouraged. However, it is still fair to note that although some candidates have come out with robust policies or introduced legislation—and thus made the issues central to their presidential campaigns—others have barely given them a sentence on their campaign websites.

This distinction helps to reveal which candidates are truly committed. We should also consider each candidate's overall platform when we assess their campaign rhetoric. For example, Yang's proposed six months of paid leave for single parents would be wonderful, but since he doesn't provide a detailed plan and puts most of his energy into promoting a “universal basic income” that wouldn't cover the average annual cost of infant care in the United States, it seems likely that his overall advocacy for parents and child care workers would be limited.

When more detailed policies or legislation are included, it is still important to consider their scope. Providing 12 weeks of partially paid leave is a vast improvement over a few weeks of unpaid leave, but we, as socialists, support more time off at full pay. Many of the candi-

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Preschool for all is truly winnable

Portland DSA is getting ready to put universal pre-K on the ballot ... and pay for it by taxing the rich.

BY CARI LUNA

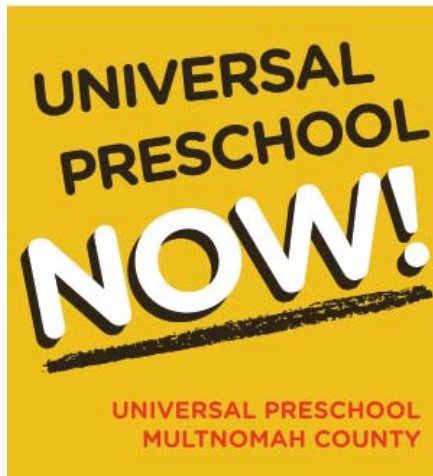
My children went to a hippie preschool with a massive garden the kids could roam through, multiple tree houses, and a year-round, play-based curriculum run by engaged, empathetic professionals. Three days a week of attendance cost us about \$700 a month per kid. We could barely afford it, but we wanted our children to get a good start to their educations and to learn to play and get along in groups. Just as important, we needed child care so that I could work for pay. So we sucked it up and paid. And paid. We were extremely fortunate that we could afford private preschool, not just for the idyllic garden and tree houses, but because in Portland there are few other options.

What about families who can't afford private preschool? The programs offered by city community centers only run for three hours a day, rendering them useless for working parents. Preschool Promise, which provides free preschool for kids in families that earn up to double the federal poverty line, offers six hours a day of coverage, but only during the school year. If your family earns more but still can't afford a pricey private preschool, you're out of luck.

Portland DSA wants to bring the essential support of free universal pre-K to families in Multnomah County, and we propose to do it by taxing the rich.

At the heart of our campaign are the following principles:

- That the plan be truly universal, free for everyone.
- That it be play-based, full-day, full-year preschool.
- That each community be free to develop the program that suits their particular needs.
- That child care workers in the program earn at least \$18/hour and get free professional development support.



- That it be funded by a marginal income tax on the top 5%.

Rollout will begin in highest-need neighborhoods, giving us three years to build up the workforce, infrastructure, and reserve fund.

Here's how we're going about it:

We looked at existing universal pre-K programs, with particular focus on New York City and Washington, DC, to understand what they entail, how they were implemented, and how their models might be applied in Portland. New York's free, universal program has increased capacity every year since it began in 2014, with 70,000 three- and four-year-olds now enrolled, but it only runs during the school year. Washington, DC, has offered free, all day, year-round preschool for all three- and four-year-olds since 2008. However, to our knowledge, no U.S. city or state has raised compensation for family child care providers and all preschool staff to a floor of at least \$18 an hour, and of all teachers to parity with elementary school teachers. That is a fundamental part of our plan for Portland.

Our research team, made up of skilled analysts and a local economist, considered potential revenue streams and political jurisdictions in consultation with a wide range of community groups and labor unions, and then created our tax proposal and cost model. We zeroed in on the November 2020 election and created a campaign timeline. In April 2019, a year and a half after beginning our research and planning, we presented the campaign at a general chapter meeting for a vote. Universal

Pre-K Now was unanimously approved as a flagship campaign.

Our field workers canvass and table every weekend, building our contact list in anticipation of Get Out the Vote efforts as well as building our team of active volunteers. Our goal is to collect 2,000 contacts and have 200 volunteers ready for the ballot signature-gathering period that will run from January to August 2020. Besides building up our database of interested voters, this early list-building demonstrates interest, raises awareness, and aids in fundraising.

We're actively building the Universal Preschool NOW! Coalition, asking organizations and institutions to join us in the campaign by signing an endorsement letter. We're working closely with multiple child care worker unions, as well as non-unionized workers. We're also working with the Oregon chapter of the National Organization for Women to push universal pre-K as a feminist demand of reproductive justice, and with the local chapters of several racial justice groups. Financial support is not a condition of membership, but it's understood that a meaningful level of support is needed to win the ballot measure as a grassroots campaign.

Here in Portland, strong, universal social programs are routinely challenged by the liberal establishment, which supports smaller, means-tested programs. To make matters tougher still, Oregon has very lax campaign finance laws, so we're up against corporate "progressive" champions with their own agendas. In this particular case, there is an alternative ballot measure for universal "access" to preschool being put forth by venture philanthropists. Their program would be means tested and would keep workers' wages low, in direct contradiction to two of our core demands.

The ballot measure must be submitted in December 2019, at which point our field operation will pivot from list-building to signature gathering, with the goal of 45,000 signatures by the August 5, 2020 deadline. Here is where we will ask our large coalition to support the campaign with extensive community outreach.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Less Rent, More Control

Housing is a nationwide crisis—but the federal government is MIA.

BY PETER DREIER

The U.S. housing crisis is a ticking time bomb. Rising rents, massive evictions, increasing homelessness, and an ongoing wave of foreclosures are exploding into a political movement for housing justice. As with the healthcare crisis, the profit motive is at the root of the problem. The culprits are banks, developers, and landlords. Like the health crisis, too, the shortage of affordable housing is bad for the economy. People who spend more than one-third of their income just to keep a roof over their heads don't have much discretionary income to spend in local businesses. People forced to move frequently or live far from their jobs are often late to work and exacerbate the pollution crisis due to long commutes.

The scale of the problem

The quest to provide what has come to be called “affordable housing” is hobbled by one fundamental reality: Too much housing is in the for-profit market sector, and too little is in a social sector permanently protected from rising prices.

The housing situation is terrible for the middle class, but even worse for the poor. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there isn't a single county in the entire country where a renter working 40 hours a week and earning minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom apartment. In order to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment, renters need to earn a wage of \$23 an hour. This “housing wage” is much higher in some areas.

With their backs to the wall, renters around the country are mobilizing to protect and expand tenants' rights. A growing number of cities and suburbs have adopted some form of rent control and prohibitions against arbitrary eviction. This year, both Oregon and California passed statewide annual rent caps and “just cause” eviction laws. More and more municipalities have also adopted “inclusionary zoning” laws that

require housing developers to include some portion of their units—typically 10% to 20%—that are affordable to low- and moderate-income residents. The housing justice movement has not only won local victories around housing policy but also helped put progressives into public office.

Still, only the federal government has the resources to fix the housing crisis. But since Ronald Reagan took office in 1980, the federal government has abdicated its responsibility.

Things are different this year. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, in par-

In Western Europe and even in Canada, a significant proportion of the housing stock is outside the traditional marketplace.

ticular, have put forward bold housing plans that get at the root causes of the serious housing mess the nation is in.

Solutions: social housing

For the almost two-thirds of Americans who own their own homes, it is their major asset and principal source of wealth. And home ownership is the biggest housing subsidy program in the country because of the mortgage interest deduction. This is a \$70 billion tax write-off that primarily benefits higher income homeowners. In fact, the federal government spends more to help the 7 million households with incomes above \$200,000 than to help the 55 million households with incomes below \$50,000.

Homeowners view their home as an investment that will appreciate as housing prices rise. In the absence of a strong welfare state like those in Western Europe, they consider their homes a

buffer for when they retire, face extraordinary medical bills, lose their job, or need to borrow money to pay for their children's college education. But as we saw in the wake of the 2008 mortgage meltdown, prices can plummet.

Public policies can shift the relative attractiveness of owning and renting. U.S. homeowners take for granted that they can make a profit from the sale of their homes. Landlords assume that they can raise rents to any level if there are desperate consumers willing to pay.

Yet housing need not be a choice between homeownership and renting. In Western Europe, and even in Canada, a significant proportion of the housing stock is outside the traditional marketplace. It is called “social housing,” and it is very popular.

Even in the United States, there are embryonic variants of social housing—such as limited-equity cooperatives, mutual housing associations, and homes built as part of community land trusts—that eliminate or dramatically reduce profit-taking. Housing is viewed as a social provision rather than as a commodity. Residents trade secure tenure and affordable costs in exchange for giving up the opportunity to speculate on the value of their homes. Social housing involves long-term affordability; government subsidies; and, in the best-case scenarios, mixed-income projects. Several progressive organizations, including People's Action and the People's Policy Project, as well as Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have put forward housing plans that incorporate key components of social housing.

Social housing should be permanently affordable and provide residents with security from eviction. It should be mixed-income, so that it does not ghettoize people based on race or class. It should be located in cities and suburbs alike, which requires changes in zoning laws. Only the federal government can mandate states and cities to revise their exclusionary zoning laws to accommodate social housing. And it should be well built and well designed, with public and community spaces for meetings and recreation. The federal government should establish a public bank to finance social housing and/or require private

banks to make loans to social housing developments.

For that to happen, the political constituency for housing justice has to expand.

During most of the 20th century, organized labor was at the forefront of the progressive housing movement. In addition to cooperative housing, several unions established banks, credit unions, and building-and-loan societies to offer members low-interest mortgages.

Unions were instrumental in expanding federal housing programs in the 1960s and early 1970s. Since then, a few unions have used a combination of union pension funds and government subsidies to create housing, but with some notable exceptions they have not

been part of housing justice coalitions at the local and federal levels, even though rent increases often wipe out whatever gains unions make in raising wages.

Renters are the sleeping giant of American politics. They are less likely than homeowners to vote—just 49% of renters cast a ballot in 2016, compared to 67% of homeowners—and can make a big difference in election outcomes.

Among homeowners, Donald Trump beat Hillary Clinton by a margin of 6 percentage points, but Clinton won the renter vote by 30 percentage points. An analysis by Chris Salviati found that “if renter voter turnout had matched homeowner voter turnout in 2016, Hillary Clinton would have won four key swing states—Florida, Michigan, Pennsylva-

nia, and Wisconsin—leading to an electoral college victory of 307-231.”

The underlying idea of any progressive policy is that housing should be a right, not a privilege. But for that slogan to be translated into policy, the housing justice movement needs to grow big enough to exercise political clout and shape the future.

Los Angeles DSA member Peter Dreier is a professor of politics and chair of the Urban & Environmental Policy Department at Occidental College and coeditor, with Kate Aronoff and Michael Kazin, of *We Own the Future: Democratic Socialism American Style*, forthcoming, New Press, January 2020.

Housing policy puts profits over people

More than any other affluent nation, the United States relies most heavily on private market forces to house its population. The federal role in housing began during the Great Depression, when reformers recognized that the private market and philanthropy could not solve the nation’s housing problems. The New Deal adopted policies to regulate banks and support mortgages in order to expand homeownership. It also created the first public housing program to stimulate jobs and provide subsidies to the working class. Housing reformers pushed for well-designed, mixed-income, government-subsidized housing projects, sponsored by unions, church groups, and other nonprofit organizations as well as government agencies.

During its first few years, the New Deal built a few model developments that reflected this vision. They included day-care centers and playgrounds, involved residents in cultural and educational activities, and were physically attractive enough that upwardly mobile working-class families wanted to live there.

But the reformers were soon outmaneuvered by the real estate industry. The landmark 1949 Housing Act established a national goal of “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.”

But the country has never come

close to delivering on that promise. Developers, real-estate agents, and bankers worried that well-designed and affordable government-sponsored housing would compete with the private sector for middle-class consumers. They warned about the specter of socialism. The real estate industry sabotaged public housing by pressuring Congress to restrict its funding and limit it to the very poor. Southern senators made sure that local governments had the authority to keep public housing racially segregated.

With limited budgets, many projects were poorly constructed and badly designed. The boards of local housing authorities—dominated by business and real-estate representatives—often sited public housing developments in areas without adequate stores, transportation, or schools. Few suburbs wanted public housing at all.

Today, public housing—1.1 million apartments that house about 2.1 million low-income people—constitutes less than 1% of the nation’s housing stock. The average annual income for a public-housing household is \$14,753. The best-kept secret about public housing is that it actually provides decent, affordable housing for many people. Most today are garden apartments, low-rise walk-ups, and single-family homes or townhouses. In most cities, there are long waiting lists to get into public housing.

Starting in 1986, Congress invented a new way to bribe the rich to help house the poor—the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which gives corporations and wealthy individuals tax breaks to invest in low-income housing projects. The program has added about three million new units in roughly 46,000 projects, but the tax breaks end after 15 years.

Housing vouchers have become, by far, the largest federal subsidy program. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) now provides about 2.2 million vouchers to low-income families, who use them to find apartments in the private market. The families pay 30 percent of their income and HUD pays the rest. But HUD puts a ceiling on voucher payments, which leaves many decent apartments in better neighborhoods off-limits to voucher holders.

Federal housing programs tend to concentrate the poor in low-income ghettos in the nation’s cities, since most suburban governments have resisted efforts to spread low-income housing more evenly. Unlike food stamps, federal housing subsidies are not an entitlement program for the poor. They are a lottery. They help only five million low-income families—about one-fifth of families who are eligible for assistance.—**P.D.**

DSA members pursue power at the polls

More than 35 DSA members ran for public office November 5. Twenty of them won. Others fell short. But all came away with valuable experience promoting their politics to voters. Election Day this year fell on the birthday of socialist visionary Eugene Victor Debs. Debs ran for president five times. He never made it to the White House. But his ideas—minimum wage, public old-age pension (Social Security), municipal utilities—won in the end and are one of the enduring legacies of our socialist movement. —DM

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco DSA member **Dean Preston** ousted the incumbent in a nail-bitingly close race for Board of Supervisors. A tenants' rights attorney and the founder of the statewide group Tenants Together, Preston led a successful DSA-backed 2018 initiative campaign guaranteeing access to a city-funded attorney to renters who face eviction. For supervisor, he campaigned as a socialist on a platform of affordable housing, free public transit, clean public power, public banking, and an end to homeless sweeps. It was Preston's second run for the seat, after losing in 2016. Memorable moment: When the local Democratic Party endorsed his opponent, Preston's campaign manager gave them the middle finger.

CONNECTICUT

Central Connecticut DSA had not one but five members win public office. **Darnell Ford**, a child services worker and executive board member of SEIU 1199 New England, won a seat on the Middletown Common Council. **Kellin Atherton** won a seat on the Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission. They join three incumbent DSA electeds who were re-elected to city council seats: **Charles Decker** in New Haven, **Justin Farmer** in Hamden, and **Gina Morgenstein** in Wallingford.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston DSA member **Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler** placed fifth out of 22 candidates, winning a seat on Cambridge City Council by a comfortable margin. (The election used ranked-choice voting, and the top nine vote getters won.) A tenant organizer and renter, he ran on a platform of tenants' rights, rent control, fare-free public transit, municipal broadband, and free, in-state higher education for public school graduates, financed by contributions from MIT and Harvard. Fellow Boston DSA member **Zac Bears** also won election—to city council in nearby Medford, Massachusetts, placing fifth in a 14-way race for seven seats.

DSA MEMBERS WHO WON ELECTION NOVEMBER 5 VOTES

Boulder CO City Council	Junie Joseph	17,322
Knoxville TN City Council	Amelia Parker	11,763
San Francisco CA Board of Supervisors	Dean Preston	11,723
Virginia House of Delegates	Lee Carter*	10,701
Parkland PA School Board	Marisa Ziegler	8,638
Aurora CO City Council	Juan Marcano	6,766
Middletown CT Common Council	Darnell Ford	5,821
Middletown CT Planning Commission	Kellin Atherton	5,720
Wallingford CT Town Council	Gina Morgenstein*	5,595
Medford MA City Council	Zac Bears	5,209
Westland MI City Council	Mike McDermott	4,802
Charlottesville VA City Council	Michael Payne	3,661
Saratoga Cty NY Board of Supervisors	Tara Gaston*	3,499
New Milford CT Planning Commission	Chris Ludwig	3,336
Cambridge MA City Council	Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	2,044
Lansing MI City Council	Brandon Betz	1,861
West Lafayette IN City Council	James Blanco	1,844
Hamden CT Legislative Council	Justin Farmer*	1,300
Greenwich CT Town Meeting	Hale McSharry	548
New Haven CT Board of Alders	Charles Decker*	477

* re-elected

NOT THIS TIME

Columbus OH City Council	Liliana Rivera Baiman	27,035
Seattle WA City Council	Shaun Scott	15,568
Bellingham WA City Council Ward 5	Chanan Suarez	9,206
Denver CO School Board	Radhika Nath	7,509
Lawrence KS City Commission	Joey Hentzler	6,257
Medford MA City Council	Curtis Tuden	3,510
Doyleston PA Township Supervisor	Connor O'Hanlon	2,628
Southfield MI City Council	Sara Habbo	2,385
Des Moines IA City Council	Chelsea Chism-Vargas	1,819
Ferndale MI City Council	Nada Daher	1,464
Ferndale MI Mayor	Brian Stawowy	1,463
Billings MT City Council	Randy Heinz	1,443
Woodland Hills School Bd Pittsburgh	Darnika Reed	1,212
Richmond VA City Council	Nicholas Da Silva	1,016
Traverse City MI Commissioner	Evan Dalley	986
Athens OH Mayor	Damon Krane	624
Clarkston GA City Council	Andrea Cervone	274

We apologize for any errors. This list includes only people who are, to our knowledge, public about being DSA members, not the many comrades in the struggle who also identified as democratic socialists.

How to raise funds and build community

Detroit's Douglass-Debs is a model worth imitating.

Ready for a socialist party? In Detroit, it's the annual Douglass-Debs dinner, named for firebrand abolitionist Frederick Douglass and socialist icon Eugene Debs. Douglass-Debs is Metro Detroit DSA's biggest fundraiser and a way to cement community ties and honor members and allies for their work.

This year's dinner—chaired by U.S. Representative (and Detroit DSA member!) Rashida Tlaib—drew 300 people to the UAW Local 600 hall October 5 and netted \$10,000 for the chapter. To get the party started, the Detroit DSA Marching Band burst in playing the union anthem “Which Side Are You On?” and later led the crowd in singing “Solidarity Forever” and the “Internationale.” In 2006, Douglass-Debs featured Bernie Sanders. This year, Tlaib shared the stage with Abdul El-Sayed, a doctor and Medicare for All advocate who ran for Michigan governor last year.

Tlaib presented awards to UNITE HERE Local 24 president Nia Winston, who led the 2018 Detroit Marriott strike, and Tameka Ramsey, whose group Pontiac Policy Council allied with Detroit DSA to host a brake light clinic. Honors also went to David Green, Detroit DSA chair from 1996 to 2018, and to Rick Haberman, founder of the chapter's



Dana Ocker

Rashida Tlaib greets celebrated DSAer Selma Goode. Debs still lived when Goode was a baby. She marched with Dr. King, and joined DSA at the invite of founder Michael Harrington. Watch Means of Production's video about Goode at bit.ly/2Di6Evv.

Medicare For All working group, who died last year in a motorcycle accident.

The event raised money in several ways. Venue (and union-made beer) were donated by Local 600. Tickets for the dinner—catered by a Bangladeshi women's gardening collective—sold for \$40 (additional solidarity tickets made it possible for GM strikers, students, and low-income supporters to attend). Allied organizations also bought 10-

seat tables for \$350 (or \$750 to be listed as a patron). And ads in a dinner booklet enabled unions, businesses and individuals to show support ranging from \$40 to \$600.

STEAL THIS IDEA: Atlanta DSA has been doing a Douglass-Debs dinner since 2007. Chicago DSA has its own version, the Debs-Parsons-Randolph dinner and dance party.

—DM

MICHIGAN

Metro Detroit DSA ran a slate of members in Ferndale, a town of 19,900 just north of Detroit. Mayoral candidate **Brian Stawowy** and city council candidate **Nada Daher** came up short. But in nearby Westland, chapter member **Mike McDermott** won one of four city council seats.

OHIO

Columbus DSA member **Liliana Rivera Baiman** — an immigrant, working mom, and longtime labor organizer — placed seventh in an eight-way race for four at-large seats on Columbus City Council. Her campaign—which stressed opposition to corporate tax abatements—was backed by the Working Families Party and unions, but failed to

beat out four incumbent Democrats.

PENNSYLVANIA

Kendra Brooks ran as a Working Families Party candidate for one of two Philadelphia City Council seats reserved for minority parties ...and won big, by over 10,000 votes, becoming the first candidate from outside the Democratic or Republican parties to win in more than 60 years. It was a major mobilization for both Philly and for national DSA, which mobilized DSA members nationwide to knock on doors.

VIRGINIA

Charlottesville DSA co-founder **Michael Payne**—also co-founder of Indivisible Charlottesville—won a seat on Charlottesville City Council on a platform of

building community wealth, funding affordable housing, police accountability, and becoming a carbon neutral city.

WASHINGTON

Seattle DSA member Shaun Scott came up short in a city council race, with 46.2% of the vote. But he publicized an openly socialist platform that called for public housing, municipal broadband, and a Green New Deal funded by congestion pricing and taxing the rich.

Where's my chapter?

Democratic Left wants to hear from you. If your chapter has a designated communicator, make sure they email us at dlmagazine@dsausa.org about the most exciting work you're doing.

Universal child care

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

dates' child care and preschool proposals are not universal, but focus on providing more children from low- and moderate-income households access to affordable options. Such an approach addresses the most immediate need, but we can still argue for fully funded public universal child care and preschool and improvements to the working conditions of domestic, child care, and early education workers.

At first glance, Sanders appears to fall into the category of candidates who may not be truly committed because they lack detailed policies behind their positions. However, because he is an avowed socialist, we know that they fit into his broader political platform.

Still, it is important for

Sanders to develop program details. While he has made labor a central focus of his campaign—and so both directly and indirectly focuses on improving the lives of working parents and domestic and child care workers—providing more detailed policies on paid parental leave, public universal child care, and public universal pre-K is necessary. He has made it clear that, unlike other candidates, he intends his programs to be truly universal and not means tested. We must pressure him to advance that position with clear policies on these imperative issues. ■

Cecilia Gingerich is a member of Centre County DSA and the Strikewave editorial collective.

Preschool for all

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

From September 2020 to the election in November, we'll be in Get Out the Vote mode, with 202,521 YES votes needed to win a high-turnout election.

After the election, and VICTORY, implementation of the three-year roll-out plan begins. Our initiative would create the funding mechanism, which is planned as a 3.9% tax on taxable income over \$165,000 for individuals, which corresponds to a gross income of roughly \$200,000 before deductions. For couples filing jointly, it would be 3.9% in taxable income over \$190,000 (roughly \$225,000 in gross income). The tax would be collected as an additional line on the Oregon state tax return. Starting in 2022, the new tax revenue would fund an account at the county dedicated to implementing the universal pre-

school program. The program is expected to cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per child per year.

We started with the basic idea of taxing the rich and zeroed in on universal pre-K as a project that is small enough to win, but big enough to matter. Child care is widely and deeply needed in Portland and causes as much economic stress and displacement as rising rents; has a historically undervalued workforce; and has a second-generation impact when kids who don't get to go to preschool don't do as well as those who do. Portland DSA is throwing its energy into this campaign, and we're extremely optimistic. ■

Cari Luna is the author of *The Revolution of Every Day*, which won the Oregon Book Award for Fiction. She is a member of Portland DSA.

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Comrades, this is your publication.

DSA's volunteer-led *Democratic Left* needs skilled illustrators, graphic artists, photographers, designers, reporters, and editors. Apply online at democraticleft.dsausa.org/apply

FURTHER READING

Bleak House

Books to take us home, past capitalist predation

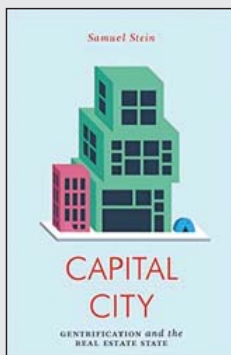
BY CHRISTINE LOMBARDI

For most of us, our #1 concern is keeping a roof over our heads. Whether you're paying a landlord, a hotel or AirBNB, or the bank that owns "your" house, the cost of shelter is often a source of worry and outrage (c.f. "The Rent is Too Damned High"). Meanwhile, with a president who embodies the "real estate" industry, we've become numb to those who make millions playing fast and loose with other people's shelter and to the specific damage inflicted on communities of color.

The nefarious landlord has been a staple of anguish and melodrama for more than a century, but how does the housing crisis fit into the struggle against capitalism? That intersection at the nexus of shelter—between capital, financialization, and racism—sparked an invaluable crop of new books in 2019. Some narrate its evolution in sharp journalistic detail; others zoom out for a more big-picture, explicitly socialist analysis. Together, they offer a vivid portrayal of suffering and present strategies for organizing.

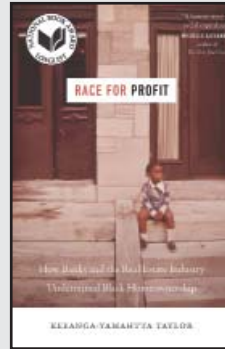
■ **CAPITAL CITY: GENTRIFICATION AND THE REAL ESTATE STATE**

Many DSAers started their year's reading with Sam Stein's big-picture analysis that places much blame on urban planners, "who enacted 'urban renewal' plans in cities across the country, which displaced hundreds of thousands of people by demolishing long-standing working class and industrial neighborhoods." Stein then described "the force underlying [planners]..."



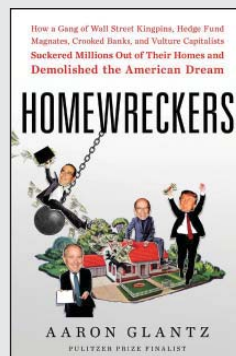
work as a 'police power.'"

■ **RACE FOR PROFIT: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership**
Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor interrogates how more traditional forms of racist exclusion, such as discrimination against nonwhite tenants and redlining, gave way to what she calls "predatory inclusion," setting up African Americans on the road to foreclosure and solidifying racist stereotypes while refusing to truly enforce the 1968 Fair Housing Act. Narrating the story of a sea-change in housing policy and its dire impact on African Americans, *Race for Profit* reveals how the urban core was transformed into a new frontier of cynical extraction. Taylor's narrative largely ends with the 1980s and the Reagan administration, with acknowledgment that "predatory inclusion" continues.



■ **HOMEWRECKERS: How a Gang of Wall Street Kingpins, Hedge Fund Magnates, Crooked Banks, and Vulture Capitalists Suckered Millions Out of Their Homes and Demolished the American Dream**

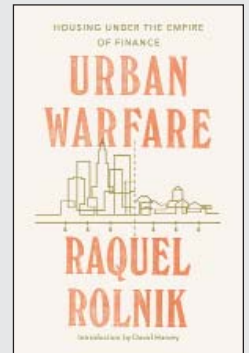
Aaron Glantz's story starts where Taylor's leaves off, with mid-1980s changes that made mortgage debt a plaything for capital markets. "In 1986, President Reagan signed an overhaul of the American tax system, containing a provision allowing bond traders who bought and sold mortgage-backed securities to cut their large single bundles



into tranches," slices that could promise greater revenue for investors like the "Homewreckers" of the book's title. Glantz's true-crime saga includes current power players, like Steve Mnuchin and Wilbur Ross, and lesser-known rogues, many of whom founded companies that became landlords to the former homeowners. "The rise of these corporate landlords drove a generational transfer of wealth from hundreds of thousands of individual homeowners to a handful of well-heeled bankers and titans of private equity."

■ **URBAN WARFARE: Housing Under the Empire of Finance**, by Raquel Rolnik shows us how global the disease has become. "This housing finance: It looks like a political drug," she quotes

a European economist. Describing its effects from Boston to Bangalore, Rolnik sees the crisis as "the expression and result of a long process of deconstruction of housing as a social good and its transformation into a commodity and financial asset," aided by a conservative political vision in which "citizens are replaced by consumers and players and capital markets." See also the analysis featured recently in Democratic Left Online, via a sharp review by James Neimester.



All of these books are calls to action toward a future that values shelter as a social good, inviting organizers and thinkers to work toward that future. They serve as fuel for the struggle. ■

Christine Lombardi, an editor at DL Online, has covered tenants-rights struggles in lower Manhattan for the weekly *Chelsea Now* and the foreclosure crisis in Philadelphia for *WHYY.org*. A new homeowner, she's trying not to be a gentrifier.

BY THE NUMBERS

DSA Members
as of mid-November
56,794

**DSA Chapters &
Organizing Committees**
201

YDSA Chapters
80

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