



DSAUSA.ORG

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

BUILDING OUR POWER FOR



THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

**DEMOCRATIC
LEFT**

Executive Editor
Maria Svart

Editor
Maxine Phillips

Editorial Team
Ian Hyzy
Alexander Lee
Christine Lombardi
Stephen Magro
Don McIntosh
Christine Riddiough

Founding Editor
Michael Harrington
(1928–1989)

Art Direction & Layout
Brianna Harden

Asst. Art Director
Devon Manney

Book Review Editor
Stephen Magro

Online Editor
Christine Lombardi

Proofreader: Pam Grant-Ryan

Production: Ed Hedemann

Cover Art: Val Ross

Democratic Left (ISSN 1643207) is published quarterly at P.O. Box 1038, New York NY 10272.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY (Publication No. 701-960).

Subscriptions: \$25 regular, \$30 institutional.

Postmaster: Send address changes to P.O. Box 1038, New York NY 10272. (212) 726-8610.

Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily the organization.

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 OUR POWER,
PLAYING TO WIN**

BY **MARIA SVART**

In November 2016, DSA had fewer than 10,000 members. This year, 12,000 new people joined just between October 1 and November 11. And by the time this issue arrives in your mailbox, that number will have grown. At more than 85,000 members, we are getting closer to our goal of 100,000 organized democratic socialists. Imagine our power. Imagine what we can accomplish together!

And we will need each other. Republicans fully embraced Trumpism and massively increased their turnout, using the enormous disinformation system they set up to begin expanding their base demographically. Even as we continue to face the raging pandemic, economic devastation, and coming austerity cuts, we must examine the lessons of the fall.

On the Democratic side, labor and social movements won this election: Ilhan Omar boosted turnout in Minneapolis to deliver Minnesota; Rashida Tlaib boosted turnout in Detroit to flip Michigan; UNITE HERE members canvassed tirelessly in Philadelphia, Las Vegas, and alongside a vibrant immigrant rights movement in Phoenix; and in Atlanta, Black Lives Matter and Black community organizations transformed the state’s electoral terrain. Yet expectations of a blue wave did not pan out, and Democratic Party leaders were quick to blame socialists and the uprising against police violence.

Yes, the “blue wave” fizzled, but there was a true red wave—our kind of red! We won 29 out of our 40 nationally endorsed campaigns; we now have “squads” in state legislatures in Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Maine, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Maryland, California, and Michigan; and we won eight out of eleven major ballot initiatives.

We’re still a political organization, not a party, but contrast the visions of our endorsed candidates and our campaigns with those of a Democratic Party leadership that fails to listen to working-class people and fails to invest in building grassroots power. Is it any wonder that close to 80 million eligible people still didn’t vote in this election?

Let’s talk about what will inspire people to vote—and to build power between elections. Here’s a sampling of nationally endorsed DSA victories.

Portland Maine DSA passed initiatives that expanded tenant protections; mandated a \$15 minimum wage and time and a half during a declared emergency; added enforcement to the ban on city officials’ use of facial recognition technology; and enacted a local Green New Deal with green building, pro-labor, and affordable housing provisions for certain developments, including city-funded projects. A fifth initiative, restricting short-term

(Continued on page 15)



HOW TO GET UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL: TAX THE RICH

Portland DSA's big ballot win will garner \$200 million a year to pay for free preschool and a living wage

BY **DON MCINTOSH**

Illustration by **BLUE DELLIQUANTI**

Last month, voters in Multnomah County, Oregon, approved a ballot measure to offer free preschool to every child and a living wage to every preschool teacher. The proposal, paid for with a tax on the rich, passed by a whopping 64%. Multnomah County, population 813,000, includes Portland and its east-side suburbs and is Oregon's most left-leaning and populous county.

Under the measure, the county will phase in tuition-free preschool for all three- and four-year-olds, taught by preschool teachers paid \$38.80 an hour and assistant teachers paid \$19.91 an hour. It's funded by a 1.5% to 3.8% top marginal tax on high incomes that only the top 8% of county income earners will pay.

The measure was referred to voters by the elected Multnomah County Commission, but its most important details owe everything to an extraordinary campaign spearheaded by Portland DSA that began in early 2017 as a "tax the rich" effort. Bothered by economic inequality, DSA member John Bethencourt and others calculated how much revenue different tax structures could bring into local government. When the City of Portland announced closures of community centers amid an economic boom, DSAers packed budget hearings to

oppose the cuts. Portland City Council members lamented the cuts, but lacked the nerve to adopt DSA's proposal to tax the rich.

"We realized that going and yelling at the mayor, which is what we did at that point, wasn't going to go anywhere," says Portland DSA member and campaign co-coordinator Emily von W. Gilbert. "You have to think about an analysis of power, and try not to engage in the wishful thinking of advocacy, of appealing to the morals of elected officials."

DSA organizers started thinking about taking the tax-the-rich proposal directly to voters via ballot initiative, and decided it would more likely succeed if paired with something the public wanted. "Other Portland DSA members were organizing childcare workers. What about universal preschool?"

"We thought it would be small enough to be winnable, big enough to be meaningful, and something people could get really excited about," Bethencourt says.

Universal preschool is a fitting plank in the socialist policy arsenal because it's a public solution to a demonstrated market failure. When preschool is left to the private market, parents struggle to afford tuition, teachers struggle to survive on the wages, and providers struggle to stay afloat. Universal preschool is also a socialist-feminist cause, because preschool's low-wage workforce is overwhelmingly female, and because when families can't afford preschool, it's most often mothers who stay home, sacrificing earnings, education, and career.

The campaign launched in mid-2019 as the Universal Preschool NOW! Coalition (UP Now). But almost immediately, supporters discovered a formidable obstacle. An elected county commissioner was already working on a preschool expansion proposal. Unlike the program DSA members envisioned, the county's "Preschool for All" (P4A) plan was a means-tested,

school-year-only program for low-income families. It would cover just half the county's children in 10 years, with an assistant teacher wage floor of \$15 an hour, barely above the Portland-area minimum wage.

UP Now leaders were convinced P4A's halfway-there program would be a grave mistake. Universal programs like Social Security and Medicare generate their own durable political support and become untouchable, while programs aimed at the poor limp along with miserly appropriations. Head Start is the perfect example: The 55-year-old preschool program is perpetually underfunded and serves just two in five poor children today.

But instead of antagonizing the competition, UP Now leaders met with P4A leaders and tried in good faith to get the county to make its proposal more like theirs. P4A wouldn't budge. Von W. Gilbert, who'd left the DSA steering committee to focus solely on UP Now, thinks P4A leaders sincerely wanted preschool expansion, but didn't believe something big could win. Having grown up in social democratic Sweden, she was free of those doubts. "I was raised with universal preschool," she says. "Nobody can tell me it isn't possible."

P4A aimed for the November 2020 ballot, too, and all it needed was a majority of the county commission to refer it to voters. But the UP Now coalition decided to proceed with the more laborious signature-gathering route to the ballot. Advised by unions and left groups that had won initiative campaigns, they convened a coalition of more than 30 groups and put the teachers union president and other allies in leadership roles as chief petitioners. Though Portland DSA was the driving force from the start, the coalition was real. Core activists didn't hide their socialist convictions, nor did they insist that allies adopt explicitly socialist messaging. To

draft ballot language, they worked with one of the state's most experienced ballot initiative attorneys.

But lawyers for the Portland Business Alliance filed several legal challenges that delayed the start of signature gathering for months. Then the pandemic hit. Even Bethencourt and von W. Gilbert, the campaign co-coordinators, doubted the campaign could gather the required 22,686 valid signatures in five weeks to meet the July 6 signature deadline.

But the effort soon gathered momentum. On social media, supporters shared links for individuals to sign and mail petitions. Volunteers canvassed parks and business districts daily and combed Portland's massive Black Lives Matter marches nightly. Teachers set up signature tables in public spaces. Moms and kids solicited passersby from their driveways. Café owners put up signs and gathered signatures. By deadline day, more than 600 volunteers had turned in signature sheets. Amid a pandemic, a grassroots campaign had gathered 32,356 signatures—one out of every 15 registered voters in the county.

"We were over the moon," Bethencourt recalls. "It was a total David and Goliath feeling."

Overnight, the tone changed in talks with P4A. P4A leaders may have thought the business group's legal challenge would finish off the rival proposal. Now they had a serious political problem: Sending two proposals to the ballot could confuse voters and lead both to fail, and the P4A proposal was unquestionably the weaker of the two. P4A and UP Now negotiated a merger, and P4A was rapidly modified to approximate UP Now. The merged measure would have a slower rollout and a lower tax rate, but it contained all the essentials: open to all kids, high wages for staff, funded by a tax on the rich.

In the end, voters approved it by nearly 2-to-1, with more than a quarter of a million votes in favor.

The *New York Times* called it "one of the most progressive universal preschool policies in the nation" and a national model. Victory has a way of raising expectations. As a beloved children's book says, "If you give a mouse a cookie, he'll ask for a glass of milk."

"We want to inspire similar efforts everywhere," Bethencourt says. "We think there's a lot of potential for action at the local level." 

Watch a 10-minute video about the campaign at bit.ly/35V4KQL

DON McINTOSH is a labor journalist in Portland and a member of the *Democratic Left* editorial team.

PAINTING THE TOWN RED

BY NICHOLAS GREYSON WARD

In March, when Kiara Bouyea walked into her first DSA meeting in Augusta, Georgia, she wasn't sure what to suspect. Would there be other young, Black, queer people there? Bouyea first learned about DSA from her partner, but neither of them had previously attended a meeting. However, Bouyea's involvement with politics and activism started much earlier. "I've been going to protests since I was about 14. When Trayvon Martin died, I remember protesting about that in downtown Atlanta," Bouyea says.

Bouyea is one of the more than 12,000 new members who have joined DSA in the past few months. "There were a lot of people there that had been canvassing for Bernie," she says. Bouyea was happy to see that the meeting was full of a diverse group of people. She was able to meet her new comrades in person, just before the COVID-19 pandemic would affect how chapters and organizing committees across the country could organize safely, and she became an official dues-paying member this September. It was at this meeting that the organizing committee (OC) had the idea for the Food Desert Relief Mutual Aid Project.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its related economic fallout made the



Food Desert Relief Mutual Aid Project an immediate priority. The program donates food to people living in food deserts throughout Augusta.

"People think that food deserts just mean that there aren't grocery stores in the area, but it's more than that," says Bouyea. She points out that some residents don't have access or time to go to grocery stores. They might have to rely on public transportation, work long shifts, or take on multiple jobs to make ends meet. Just going across town for a shopping trip becomes a major effort. The food donation project, which began in the summer, has increased access to food throughout Augusta; Bouyea's OC donates about 60 to 70 large paper bags of food a month. Bouyea and her comrades have also packed special large paper bags that, along with food, include eating utensils, can openers, and toiletries—items that are often needed by those without permanent housing. While the Food Desert Relief Mutual Aid Project currently only involves the Augusta

OC, Bouyea hopes that she can expand the project by working with activist groups and local nonprofits.

When they bring bags to apartments around Augusta, Bouyea and her comrades meet tenants whose rent has been raised to unaffordable rates. These visits open up conversations about the benefits of a tenant union, something that many tenants had never considered. "It's about more than just charity," Bouyea tells *Democratic Left*. "It is about mutual aid."

In another project, the Augusta OC has bought newspaper and magazine stands from a now-defunct newspaper and plans to put them in various locations around the city. "We think that these stands, or racks, can help spread the word about DSA," she says. The stands will hold issues of *Democratic Left* alongside pamphlets focused on political education. The project feels right at home for Bouyea, who had worked in the publishing industry before beginning a credential program at the Western Governors University's Teachers College. OC members plan to paint the stands a DSA red and spray paint a QR code on the side of each box that, when scanned, can take someone directly to some web resources about DSA. Nowadays, newspaper stands are mainly for free neighborhood papers, and the OC hopes that potential users will be drawn to the bright-red containers even if they haven't heard of DSA before.

As the COVID-19 pandemic changes how chapters and organizing

(Continued on page 14)

A Socialist Christmas Carol

BY **NICHOLAS POWERS**

Illustration by **DEVON MANNEY**

“I am not voting.” Ebaya Scooge hit the table. “I am not organizing. I am done!” Around the table, anger passed from face to face. Her boyfriend, Jay, palmed his eyes. Her co-organizers Celia and Feather stared at the ceiling.

“And you know why?” She leveled an accusing finger. “The Democratic Party is...”

“The graveyard of social movements,” they chanted in a sarcastic monotone. The tension drew stares from the bar.

It was Christmas Eve, and they met to plan a media push of the Biden administration to adopt a Green New Deal. It was Ebaya’s brainchild, and her working group, but she answered fewer and fewer emails. And filled the group’s Instagram with sardonic memes of people as sheep and politics as useless. They knew why she was enraged. Biden had brought corporate lobbyists into his administration.

“We fought to get him elected,” Ebaya shouted. “Remember how we protested? Remember the smell of pepper spray? Remember how Joshua is still in the hospital? After all that, the idiot turns around and gives Big Business a role? Fuck him!”

She grabbed her backpack, threw a twenty on the

table and left the bar. Outside, her breath was white plumes in the icy night. Stabbing the cell phone with her fingers, she looked up and down the street. Where was the Uber?

The Spirit of Protests Past

A car turned the corner and pulled up, Ebaya got in scowling. Thoughts tumbled through her head. Why am I wasting my time? Why don’t I leave this shithole country?

The streetlights zipped by fast. Too fast. Ebaya told the driver to slow down. The car sped up; and outside, buildings shrank, got older; people on the street were dressed in gaudy eighties gold chains and red jackets and carried boom boxes. Panicked, she pulled on the handle, but the door was locked. In the rear-view mirror, she saw Ella Baker.

“What the...?” The car stopped, and she slammed into the seat. Ella got out. Ebaya did, too. They stood in 1980s Bronx. Two children played on a heap of rubble. It was Ebaya and her brother, Emilio.

“Why am I here?” Ebaya asked.

“Home,” Ella replied. “You said ‘I am done.’ And I felt that way, too, sometimes. It’s hard holding up your part of the world. But maybe you need to remember why you began fighting.”

She took Ebaya by the arm and they followed the past selves of her and her sibling around the ruins. Crack vials crunched underfoot. The gutted buildings loomed like giant tombstones to the American Dream.

“Remember, you wanted to change the world,” Ella said. “It seemed too big of a job until you realized you didn’t have to do it alone. And you weren’t the only one who knew hunger. People all over know it. When you go to the people, and ask them who they are, what they want, they’ll bring democracy.”

They followed her childhood self up the stairs to an apartment where their mom cooked on the one burner that worked on the stove. Her brother set the table. Ebaya leaned in to hug him, but her arms passed through him like a hologram.

“I know,” Ella continued. “You feel guilty that you got into a private school on scholarship. You moved on. Your brother fell behind. And he’s so far gone that no political



fix can heal the hurt. But you're not alone. How many families have been broken?"

Ella vanished, and Ebaya stroked the back of her brother's head.

The Spirit of Protests Present

Ebaya left her childhood home. Downstairs, a bus turned the corner. Its headlights flooded the street, and its doors opened in a hiss. She stepped in. Bernie Sanders was dressed in an MTA uniform.

"You got to be kidding." She shook her head. "Who's next? Frederick Douglass?" She sat down near a window.

"Welcome to the Revolution," he laughed, and closed the doors. The bus heaved on to the expressway, and NYC transformed again. The ruins vanished, new stores shone on the sidewalks, new fashions appeared, as money washed through the neighborhoods. Seeing the gentrification of the city at high speed made Ebaya realize how quickly it shed the poor in favor of transplants with money to burn. The police patrolled the borders between classes, stopping and frisking the boys from neighborhoods like hers.

"The masses are asses," Ebaya shouted. "The Great Society died in the shopping mall. Do you see how a little money made people into individual little consumer bots?"

"The top One Percent have always practiced divide and conquer," Bernie said. "They pit each class against the one below. Fear of falling down a level makes solidarity hard to achieve. So, yes, all the wealth you see is

into the lower levels, they sank into halls heavy with despair. A row of solitary confinement cells stretched before her, and Bernie pointed to one. Ebaya squatted and peeked through the slit. Inside, her brother sat catatonic against the wall. He drooled on himself. His fingernails were split from clawing the wall.

"Let him out!" Ebaya pulled on the cell door. "Let him out!" The lights dimmed.

The Spirit of Protests to Come

A hand touched her shoulder. Ebaya looked up and saw Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a touch of gray in her hair, standing next to her.

"My brother." Ebaya looked again into the cell, but now it was a library filled with books. "Where. . .?"

Alexandria helped her stand. Ebaya saw that the hall was filled with books and games. They walked upstairs. Daycare workers played with children. Bright pastel letters and numbers hung on the wall.

"We abolished prisons," Alexandria said. "And re-purposed them into schools, hospitals, daycare centers, and housing." She guided Ebaya out of the former prison. A black limo waited. A trio of men in black suits stood.

"Madam President," one said and opened the door.

"Madam President?!" Ebaya stared in awe.

Alexandria chuckled as they got in. The limo sped over the bridge, and Ebaya sniffed the air. It was fresh, oddly fresh. Trees swayed everywhere. On the shoreline

(Continued on page 11)

DSA SPECIALTY: TOPPLING INCUMBENTS

At least **48 DSA members** were on the ballot this November, and at least **36 won office**, earning more than **3.1 million votes** for socialist candidates altogether.

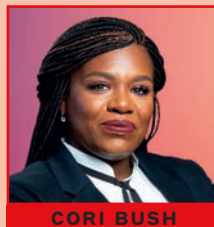
MINNESOTA

Minnesotans are sending two socialists to the capitol next year. In his second run for legislature, Twin Cities DSA member **Omar Fateh**—the son of Somali immigrants—campaigns on an explicitly socialist platform, defeated a 10-year incumbent in the August primary, and went on to win the state senate district where George Floyd was killed. Meanwhile, in Duluth, Twin Ports DSA member **Ben McEwen**—an attorney representing workers with disability claims—crushed an incumbent Democrat nearly 3-1 with a campaign centered on the climate crisis, affordable housing, and Medicare for All.



OMAR FATEH

in a blue district. Bush is best known nationally as one of three insurgent candidates featured alongside AOC in the 2019 Netflix documentary *Knock Down the House*. A registered nurse, pastor, and formerly homeless single mom, she got active during the 2014 Ferguson uprising. Now she'll advocate for the platform she was elected on: Medicare for All, public housing, nationwide rent control, tuition-free public college, and a Green New Deal.



CORI BUSH

NEW YORK

This November, five more New York DSA members won election. Representing a district that includes Yonkers and the northernmost part of the Bronx, Lower Hudson Valley DSAer **Jamaal Bowman** will join AOC in Congress after having defeated 32-year incumbent Democrat Eliot Engel. And school teacher **Jabari Brisport**, union nurse

Phara Souffrant Forrest, housing counselor **Zohran Kwame Mamdani**, and tenant organizer **Marcela Mitaynes** will join **Julia Salazar** in the state legislature. Albany's new socialist squad is markedly diverse: Forrest is the daughter of Haitian immigrants; Mitaynes immigrated from Peru at age 5; Brisport will be the state's first Black openly gay legislator; and Mamdani, son of filmmaker Mira Nair, is an Indian-Ugandan hip-hop artist who performs as Mr. Cardamom. In each case, most of the drama was in the June Democratic primary, when **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** also clobbered a business-backed TV talking head by more than 4-1 and cleared the way to a second term.



PHARAH SOUFFRANT FORREST



JAMAAL BOWMAN

dian-Ugandan hip-hop artist who performs as Mr. Cardamom. In each case, most of the drama was

in the June Democratic primary, when **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** also clobbered a business-backed TV talking head by more than 4-1 and cleared the way to a second term.

PENNSYLVANIA

In heavily Democratic Philly, DSA member **Nikil Saval** was unopposed in the general, so the real feat



NIKIL SAVAL

was beating a 10-year incumbent state senator by 14 points in the June primary. Saval, for-

merly a UNITE HERE union organizer and editor of leftist literary magazine *n+1*, is cofounder of the Bernie-inspired local group Reclaim Philadelphia.

TEXAS

Austin DSA member **José Garza**—who proved DSA’s top vote-getter nationally on Nov. 3—is the latest district attorney to be elected on a platform of criminal justice reform. Garza beat his GOP opponent more than 2-1, but the real wins were a March primary and July runoff:

Backed by Bernie and the DSA, he trounced Travis County’s incumbent DA. A public defender and labor and immi-



JOSÉ GARVA

grants’ rights attorney, Garza campaigned on holding police accountable for misconduct, and ending cash bail and low level drug possession prosecutions. 🌹

DSA MEMBERS WHO WON ELECTION TO PUBLIC OFFICE NOV. 3rd

OFFICE	CANDIDATE	VOTES
Travis County TX District Attorney	Jose Garza*	393,808
Clark County NV Judge, District 8 Dept. 24	Erika Ballou	390,454
Pima County AZ Recorder	Gabriella Cázares-Kelly	283,591
U.S. Congress (MO-CD1)	Cori Bush	245,520
U.S. Congress (MI-CD13)	Rashida Tlaib*	220,307
U.S. Congress (NY-CD16)	Jamaal Bowman	161,730
California State Assembly, District 25	Alex Lee	130,718
Pennsylvania State Senate, District 1	Nikil Saval	121,154
U.S. Congress (NY-CD14)	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*	105,455
New York State Senate, District 25	Jabari Brisport	90,347
New York State Senate, District 18	Julia Salazar*	76,068
Los Angeles CA City Council, District 4	Nithya Raman	68,575
Clark County NV School District, District E	Lola Brooks*	65,061
District of Columbia Council, Ward 4	Janeese Lewis George	34,791
Minnesota State Senate, District 62	Omar Fateh	33,103
New York State Assembly, District 57	Phara Souffrant Forrest	31,857
Jefferson County KY Board of Education, District 2	Chris Kolb*	31,331
Minnesota State Senate, District 7	Jen McEwen	30,526
New York State Assembly, District 36	Zohran Mamdani	27,182
Michigan State House, 4th District	Abraham Aiyash	27,107
Pennsylvania House, District 188	Rick Krajewski	24,208
New York State Assembly, District 51	Marcela Mitaynes	22,173
San Francisco CA Supervisor, District 5	Dean Preston*	21,389
Pennsylvania State House, 184th District	Elizabeth Fiedler	19,726
Mass. State House, 27th Middlesex District	Erika Uyterhoeven	19,713
Alameda County Transit Board	Jovanka Beckles	15,498
Burbank CA City Council	Konstantine Anthony	15,222
Austin City Council, District 4	Greg Casar	11,629
Rhode Island State Senate, District 5	Sam Bell	7,657
Richmond CA City Council, District 5	Gayle McLaughlin	4,502
Montana State House, District 95	Danny Tenenbaum	4,075
Rhode Island State House, District 7	David Morales	4,068
Maine State House, District 37	Grayson Lookner	3,545
Vermont State House, Chittenden 6-4	Brian Cina*	1,858
Merced CA City Council, District 3	Bertha Perez	1,870
Redwood City CA City Council, District 3	Lissette Espinoza-Garnica	861

*re-elected

FIXING *the* BOOKS

Publishing's exploited workforce is starting to organize

BY ALLISON NICOLE SMITH

Illustration by ERIK PEDERSEN



Book publishing is an industry that capitalizes on the fear and insecurity of its workers. Being book lovers, they accept low salaries, seeing it as a necessary sacrifice to keep the beleaguered publishing industry afloat. Yet this same fragile business offered a record-breaking \$65 million advance for Michelle Obama's memoir, which went on to sell 10 million copies mere months after it was published. Penguin Random House, which published Obama's memoir, starts editorial assistants at a salary of about \$40,000 and only recently announced that it would boost entry-level salaries to \$45,000, beginning in 2021.

Although the U.S. publishing business faces obstacles in the digital era, the belief that low wages are the industry's only lifeline is a fallacy. After a sharp decline at the start of the pandemic, unit sales of print books jumped nearly 6% compared to 2019, according to NPD BookScan, which measures trends in the book publishing industry. Ebook sales increased by 31% in the month of April alone.

For the first time in recent

memory, book workers across the industry are building collective power to demand tangible and significant change. In March, employees at Hachette protested Woody Allen's memoir with a walkout; the viral hashtag #PublishingPaidMe highlighted the pay disparities between Black and non-POC authors; and on June 8, more than 1,400 book workers across the industry called out of work to protest the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black people by police, as well as the publishing industry's own racism.

These instances of collective action won't solve the deeply entrenched inequities in publishing overnight, but they are evidence of renewed labor organizing after a long period of resignation.

Although some publishing houses have unionized, a lingering stigma has undermined union strength in the industry. "I feel like I've pulled myself out of Plato's cave,

and now I'm trying to drag other people out," says a union steward at HarperCollins, referring to the difficulty of persuading people to join the union's open shop.

One of the major roadblocks to building power in the book industry is the systemic lack of wage transparency. Until recently, *Publishers*

"I feel like I've pulled myself out of Plato's cave, and now I'm trying to drag other people out."

Weekly's annual job and salary survey was the only readily available source with this kind of raw data—and it still wasn't comprehen-

sive enough to give a full picture. One group circulated a grassroots spreadsheet in which workers across the book industry anonymously shared their salaries, job titles, employers, and years of experience, among other vital data that's impossible to find elsewhere. Nearly 600 workers responded, and the spreadsheet continues to grow.

So far, book workers' efforts to organize and improve pay equity have been somewhat successful. In September, Beacon Press announced

it had raised its entry-level salary to \$44,600, a \$9,000 increase. A week later, Macmillan announced that its starting salary would be raised to \$42,000, a \$7,000 increase.

All publishing houses, including employee-owned ones like W. W. Norton & Company—where I worked for over two years as an assistant editor—are complicit in the industry-wide exploitation of low-income workers. In August, Norton announced that the salaries of its board of directors had been fully reinstated after a pandemic-induced pay cut. But for the first time since the 2008 recession, Norton

employees will not receive end-of-the-year raises. In 2016, Norton prioritized an estimated \$10-12 million office renovation over significant salary increases for its employees. Norton employees, particularly those from historically marginalized groups, have reported being “asked” to do uncompensated sensitivity reads of manuscripts. And while the volunteer-based but HR-led Diversity & Inclusion Committee is an important first step in diversifying the office, it also creates additional unpaid labor for Norton’s BIPOC, queer, and disabled employees.

Publishing workers have a long

way to go before they realize their full organizing power, but the tools and the motivation are there. The new wave of labor organizers in the industry gives hope to those who want to be able to work at what they love and still pay the bills. 🌹

ALLISON NICOLE SMITH is a freelance writer and a student at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Grub Street*, *Gotham Gazette*, *Travel + Leisure Southeast Asia*, and more.

A Socialist Christmas Carol

(Continued from page 7)

turned giant wind turbines. On the roads, the hum of electric cars passed by.

“We’re not close to done, but we greened the major cities and the surrounding rural areas,” President Ocasio-Cortez said, “It turns out people like good-paying union jobs with meaning. And it turns out that saving the planet is meaningful.” She raised her eyebrows and hands in mock surprise. “Who could have guessed?”

The presidential limo crossed into the Bronx, and Ebaya saw deer by the roadside and people on bicycles. They parked at her childhood home. The row of new buildings gleamed in the sunlight and a lush park bloomed in the front.

“Hey,” a man called.

Ebaya looked up and saw her

brother installing a solar panel. Sweat shone on his forehead. He climbed down the ladder, rushed up to her, and they hugged. He was filled out. He had purpose in his eyes.

“Come say hi to Tia Ebaya,” he gestured to his children. They jumped into her arms. Ebaya held them, and as they kissed, her eyes watered. She was overcome with confusion and joy and relief. “Thank you for helping me when I got out.” He pointed at their old childhood building, now rebuilt and bright with solar panels. “Mom would have been proud.”

Ebaya rubbed the back of his head like they were kids again. The glint on a window got into her eyes and she blinked.

Christmas Eve

When she opened her eyes, Ebaya was in front of the bar again. Inside, her friends sat around the table and

split the bill. Cars whooshed by, tires sucked at the snow. She lifted her hand and saw the MTA bus receipt with Bernie’s signature on it.

“Okay. Okay.” She let out a long sigh. “It’s not about one election or one person or even one lifetime.” On the glass door was her reflection and inside her friends at the table. Beyond her image was a whole world, deep and dynamic and in need. She reached out, opened the door and called their names. 🌹

NICHOLAS POWERS is a poet, novelist and literature professor. Upset Press is publishing *Thirst*, a political vampire novel starring a certain real estate mogul, in December 2020. His first book, *The Ground Below Zero: 9/11 to Burning Man, Darfur to New Orleans, Haiti to Occupy Wall Street*, came out in 2014.

Three September 11s, Three Who Refused to March

BY **CHRIS LOMBARDI**

Illustration by **KATIE EDWARDS**

As DSA's anti-war working groups share terror of Donald Trump's lame-duck Iran threats and the probable militarism of a Biden presidency, we know that any criticism of a "strong defense" will lead neo-liberals to ask, "What about September 11?" I've been hearing that question for decades; it seems to have supplanted the ubiquitous "What about Hitler?" I hear both from strangers when I tell them about my book, which tells the story of a dissent from war that stretches back to the American Revolution. In fact, the book actually starts on September 11, a date that recurs over the centuries. —CL

Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, was beautiful on September 11, 1777. Its succession of wooded hills made for a steep climb, both for the British and for the insurgent Continental Army. In between hills, level ground allowed for fierce fighting. Jacob Ritter, a young member of the Pennsylvania militia, watched as the active-duty "standing troops" took casualties. "The bombshells and shot fell round me like hail, cutting down my comrades on every side, and tearing off the limbs of the trees like a whirlwind." Ritter's unit stood



ready, sweating in the summer heat.

By nightfall, hundreds were dead on both sides. Pennsylvania militia units were "ordered to march forward to the charge. Our way was over the dead and dying..." The troops all carried muskets, and some of Ritter's platoon-mates fired into the distance. Ritter did not fire; he had already decided, without telling anyone, that to do so would be wrong.

Raised Lutheran, Ritter had been seized just that morning by the un-Lutheran conviction that "it was contrary to the Divine Will for a Christian to fight." As he stood still amid mortars at Chadds Ford, "I supplemented [sic] the Almighty that if he would be pleased to deliver me from shedding the blood of my fellow-creatures that day, I would never fight again." His prayer was answered, and the rest of Jacob Ritter's life was shaped by that moment of conscientious objection to war.

September 11, 1947, was a little hotter than usual in Memphis.

Tempers were running high, and local police were knocking on doors. The authorities knew that 17-year-old Charles Adams had gotten into some local scuffles of late. When they came after him, his father refused to open the door. Adams scooted. When he got to Front Street, in the older part of town, the army recruiting center shone in the morning light, "and right then and there, on September 11, 1947, I enlisted."

In January 1948, his unit arrived in Korea, where the United States was charged with "peacekeeping" in areas formerly occupied by Japan. The sub-zero temperatures froze his bones.

Adams's unit had lost all but ten soldiers by the time of his capture in December 1950. While he and the others marched uphill in heavy snow, American bombers overhead dropped napalm on the surrounding mountains and villages. "What really sickened me was when one of their napalm bombs hit a Korean hut. A woman with a baby on her back

burned before my very eyes.” At this point, Adams exchanged looks with Richards, a fellow Black GI. “We both were thinking the same thing: If this guard shoots us, well, we deserve it because we should not be in Korea.”

Adams and others survived the rest of the march, receiving horrific treatment in their first year at the Pyoktong POW camp. When Chinese troops took over the camp, Adams agreed to communicate with them on behalf of the prisoners, securing better food, bedding, and amenities that made life in camp more bearable. In February 1953, he was among the prisoners co-signing an appeal to the U.N. General Assembly certifying that “we have been kept as comfortable as possible” and asking for an immediate end to hostilities.

After the two sides signed an armistice in December 1953, some 23 “turncoats,” including Adams, refused repatriation to the United States—not because they loved communism but because they preferred the unknown of China or North Korea to Jim Crow. “The Chinese unbrainwashed me!” Adams told reporters. “The Negro had his mind brainwashed long before the Korea War. If he stayed in his place he was a good nigger.”

Adams stayed in China for 15 years, during which he met W.E.B. Du Bois on the latter’s 80th-birthday

visit to China, and only left when the Cultural Revolution shuttered the publisher he worked for. The House Un-American Activities Committee was waiting for him, as it considered expanded penalties for “assistance to enemies of the U.S. in time of undeclared war.” Adams had insisted on going home to Memphis with his Chinese wife and biracial children. There he would remain until his death in 2007, his family’s survival his last dissent.

On September 11, 2001, veteran anti-war protester Philip Berrigan, then serving a 30-month sentence for civil disobedience, “watched appalled as the second tower of the World Trade Center came down. The guards called me out, took me to the lieutenant’s office, shackled and handcuffed me, and took me to solitary,” announcing “‘No phone, no visitors!’” he told the *Progressive*. Those additional measures were not for Berrigan’s own safety: The

prison’s authorities spied trouble in the 77-year-old veteran of the Second World War, a longtime protester against the war machine. Meanwhile, elsewhere the next generation of soldier-dissenters was waking up.

Fourteen-year-old Chelsea Manning, born in Oklahoma, learned about the attacks while in school in Wales, where her family had moved after leaving her army-vet dad. Brandon Bryant, in Missoula, Montana,

saw the attacks on TV in his high school, in the shadow of the town’s army recruiting station. And ten-year-old Texan Reality Leigh Winner heard about it in her hyper-patriotic elementary school. And Jonathan Wesley Hutto, a staffer at Amnesty International, “was preparing a report back [from the World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa] when BOOM, the entire agenda went up in smoke, literally.”

A lot went up in smoke that day, a day whose memory has been evoked in the decades since to justify U.S. imperialism. These twenty-first-century soldier-dissenters emerged amid twenty-first-century warfare—as the country’s stealth empire swelled, its colonies replaced by “cooperative security locations” sprinkled with well-trained Special Forces personnel and long-distance assassinations of people who could be seen, monitored, and killed half a world away. This generation also felt the country’s founding injustices, from racism to misogyny, pressing on their necks. As with those who had gone before them, carrying muskets or slogging through snow with automatic weapons, they knew to say no. 🌹

A lot went up in smoke that day, a day whose memory has been evoked in the decades since to justify U.S. imperialism.

CHRIS LOMBARDI is a member of the *Democratic Left* editorial team. Her new book, *I Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore, Dissenters, Deserters, and Objectors from America’s Wars*, from which this article is excerpted, was published this fall by the New Press.

Resolution to Revolution: YDSA Ready to Organize

BY **GRIFFIN MAHON**

The 2020 summer convention of the Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA), held July 31–August 2, demonstrated remarkable political maturity for such a young movement. YDSA, DSA’s student section, holds an annual convention to elect leaders and set priorities as well as an annual educational and outreach conference. This year, even though pandemic circumstances forced us to convene online, YDSAers came ready: members put together slates of candidates, resolutions, and articles for the 130-plus delegates to debate. This was the largest delegation in YDSA’s history, and this new generation of socialists is a sign that our movement is here to stay.

At the 2019 YDSA convention, delegates passed every resolution put forward. As a result, members were stretched too thin to commit wholeheartedly to YDSA’s main priority, which was College for All—a program based on eliminating student debt and providing free public university education. Motivated by the economic crisis and the pandemic, alongside the already-existing regime of austerity in higher education, we decided to dedicate this year to organizing around demands to cut tuition, housing costs, and fees; change grading standards; protect essential workers; and disempower campus police. Labiba Chowdhury and Neah Havens were elected co-chairs for a one-year term. They share a vote on DSA’s National Political Committee.

We also decided to hold national reading groups so that members can study and strategize with each other across the country, and to form a rank-and-file pipeline so that interested soon-to-be graduates can find union jobs in order to rebuild a militant labor movement. Many of the discussions at the convention took for granted that it is essential for the socialist movement to “merge” itself with the layer of militant workers who have taken action in recent years. Without these organic connections, even our elected officials won’t be able to get much done.

Four years ago, YDSA had no more than a dozen chapters. Now we’re quickly passing 100, as organizers focus especially on forming chapters at high schools, community colleges, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. A key question as the organization grows is, “What should YDSA be?” Should it remain a student section or aim to organize all the youth in an area regardless of enrollment? How much should YDSA be integrated into DSA? These questions have existed in the organization since its founding. As members organize online and in person, they continue to fight for themselves and the teachers, professors, grad students, and support staff at their schools. 🌹

GRIFFIN MAHON is the executive editor of YDSA’s publication, *The Activist*.

New Member Profile

(Continued from page 5)

committees function, Bouyea’s work shows just how much a new DSA member can contribute, from creating new projects to helping strengthen already existing projects or campaigns. She is already trying to recruit new members. “There’s one person I have discussed recruiting with. She works with the Democratic Party in a nearby county, but she’s been to a lot of recent protests and she’s really interested in DSA,” Bouyea says. “She’s more interested in socialism, but she thought that working with the Democratic Party was the best she could do.” 🌹

NICHOLAS GREYSON WARD

is a journalist and writer based out of Modesto, CA, where he is a member of the Stanislaus Organizing Committee. You can follow him on Twitter @ngward94. This article is part of a series on new DSA members.

SAVE the DATE

 **WINTER
CONFERENCE**

Late February 2021

y.dsasusa.org/the-activist

From the National Director

(Continued from page 2)

rentals, was heading for a recount as this issue went to press. Despite being outspent 40 to 1, DSA and the coalition it built prevailed.

Portland Oregon DSA passed a socialist feminist referendum that is both pro-family and pro-worker: universal (not means-tested) pre-K with a massively increased wage for providers, all paid for by taxing the rich. (See story on p. 3.)

Florida DSA chapters fought for and won the \$15 minimum wage, and **Boulder DSA** won a “no eviction without representation” ballot initiative. Plus we had a slew of locally endorsed initiatives.

Heartbreakingly, we came close but still lost Proposition 15 in California to close a tax loophole for large commercial properties and capture billions for public services, but we won close to 75% of our campaigns by making demands to benefit the entire working class and doing the painstaking direct voter contact to reach them and turn them out to vote. As we wrap up 2020, every DSA member must be asking these key questions:

- **How and why were we able to win, and what does it tell us about the political moment?**
- **What kind of power do we need, and what is a strategy that builds it?**
- **What are the campaigns and practices that will allow us to talk to the 80 million people who didn't vote this time?**

Our chapters in every state of the country are out asking our coworkers and neighbors how we resist both fascism and neo-liberalism and build a better world. I hope you will look up your local DSA or YDSA group and get involved today. There's never been a more critical time. 🌹

READ MORE AT DL ONLINE:

dsausa.org/democratic-left/

**From Fact to Muddled Fiction:
The Trial of the Chicago 7**
by Brian Siano

Interracial Alliances: Black and Gold
by Alexander Lee

Time for a Catholic Spring?
by Marie Venner



Art: Devon Manney

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. *Publication Title*, “DEMOCRATIC LEFT”
2. *Publication Number*, 701960 ISSN, 1643207
3. *Filing Date*, 11/12/2020
4. *Issue Frequency*, quarterly
5. *Number of Issues Published Annually*, 4
6. *Annual Subscription Price*, \$25.00
7. *Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication*, PO BOX 1038, NEW YORK NY 10272-1038
8. *Contact Person*, Ms. MARIA SVART Telephone, (212) 727-8610
9. *Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher*, PO BOX 1038, NEW YORK NY 10272-1038, *Publisher* DSA PO BOX 1038, NEW YORK NY 10272-1038, *Editor* Maria Svart, DSA PO BOX 1038, NEW YORK NY 10272-1038, *Managing Editor* Maria Svart, DSA PO BOX 1038, NEW YORK NY 10272-1038.
10. *Owner*, Democratic Socialists of America Inc., PO BOX 1038, NEW YORK NY 10272-1038
11. *Known Bondholders, Mortgages, Other Security Holders*, None
12. *Tax Status*, Has not changed during preceding 12 months.
13. *Publication Title*, DEMOCRATIC LEFT
14. *Issue Date for Circulation Data Below*, Fall 2020

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. of Copies Each Issue, During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a.Total Number of Copies (net press run)	58233	72500
b.Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail) (1) Mailed Outside County Paid Subscriptions State on PS Form 3541	54639	67443
b.(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions States on PS Form 3541	0	0
b.(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS	0	0
b.(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS	0	0
c.Total Paid Distribution	54639	67443
d.Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		
d.(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included in PS Form 3541	0	0
d.(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included in PS Form 3541	0	0
d.(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	2733	3000
d.(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	786	2002
e.Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution	3519	5002
f.Total Distribution	58159	72445
g.Copies Not Distributed	74	55
h.Total	58233	72500
i.Percent Paid	93.95%	93.10%

16. *Publication of Statement of Ownership*, Publication of this statement will be printed in the Winter 2020 edition of this publication.
17. *Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner*, msvart@dsausa.org (MARIA SVART) Date 11/12/2020

DEMOCRATIC LEFT NEEDS SKILLED VOLUNTEERS!

DSA's all-volunteer team needs skilled writers, reporters, illustrators, photographers, and editors.

Apply here: bit.ly/3kRUU6e



DSA BY THE NUMBERS

RECRUITMENT DRIVE:

12,923 new members

2,012 renewals

Total DSA membership: **85,000+**

CAMPAIGNS:

29 victories out of 40 nationally endorsed campaigns

14 state squads of 2+ state legislators

Moving? Let us know: info@dusa.org. The Post Office charges for every returned copy of *Democratic Left*. We save money, and you don't miss an issue.

SAVE THE DATE

Our first ever **VIRTUAL** convention is set for
AUGUST 1-8, 2021

Join us for a whole week of camaraderie as we elect our political leadership, discuss and debate DSA's perspectives and goals, make changes to the national constitution and bylaws, hold organizing workshops, draft a political platform, and a whole lot more.

You don't want to miss this: mark your calendars and make sure you're receiving emails from the national office for further updates.



Democratic Socialists of America
dusa.org/join

A better world is possible.

I want to join DSA. I want to renew membership.

Enclosed are my dues: \$45 Introductory \$60 Regular \$20 Student \$27 Low-Income \$175 Sustainer An extra contribution

Name _____ Year of birth _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Union affiliation _____ School _____

Check enclosed **Electronic check** (below) This is our preferred payment method because it avoids credit card fees **Credit card** (below)

Electronic check:

Checking Savings Routing # _____ Account# _____ Personal Business

Credit card:

Visa Mastercard Card # _____ Expiration _____ Security code _____

Signature: _____

Return to: DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA PO Box 1038, New York, NY 10272

