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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. 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.

**WE JOIN DSA TO ORGANIZE**

BY MARIA SVART

In my union organizer days, I learned some sage advice from the legendary 1199 SEIU, that “the union is not a fee for services, it is the collective experience of workers in struggle. Don’t be afraid to ask workers to build their own union.”

That’s how we operate in DSA: Our power comes from our work, which can only be driven by you, our members. We are not a labor union, but we are building a rooted, long-term institution that brings you in and then pushes you to learn how to analyze the world, run the organization, and win concrete victories. Not only do we train ourselves to do the work, we fund ourselves. This means we must constantly recruit new members, which builds our power. And it means we don’t have to orient our work to please a rich donor or foundation.

This is a fundamentally different model from most other organizations. It means we are building our own collective confidence and skills in a world that tells working-class people we are alone and helpless. It also means we are collectively applying and learning what strategies work to build power, and that when opportunities or needs arise, we have the ability to mobilize.

One example is in formal politics. This November, after all votes were counted, an astounding 67% of our candidates and initiatives had won. Our electoral strategy depends on conversations at the door and on the phone, and we can field so many volunteers only because we organize between elections, too. Unfortunately, the ruling class has noticed this and will no longer be taken by surprise. After her upset Democratic primary win in Buffalo, our member India Walton lost the mayor’s race to a neoliberal Democrat who teamed up with wealthy interests and the Republican Party—the same party that is locking in new laws across the country to enact permanent minority rule in its favor and that celebrates vigilante violence. In this context, our otherwise strong electoral showing takes on new meaning. We are building a deep bench of experienced democratic socialist elected officials with a strong, organized base in their communities. This is what it will take to protect what is left of our democracy.

Another example of how our organizing work gives us a well of strength from which to mobilize is in the economic realm. You can read about our Nabisco strike solidarity in this issue, but DSA chapters are also giving or have given support to striking United Auto Workers (UAW) members at John Deere and the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE), who took a strike vote during their contract bargaining. As this issue of *Democratic Left* went to press, we learned that the John Deere workers beat back a two-tiered contract, won an immediate 10% raise, and made other major gains, while in Houston 14,000 United Food and Commercial Workers at the Kroger grocery store chain took a strike vote. But we’re not

(Continued on page 13)

RISING TO THE OCCASION:

Strike Support for Nabisco Workers

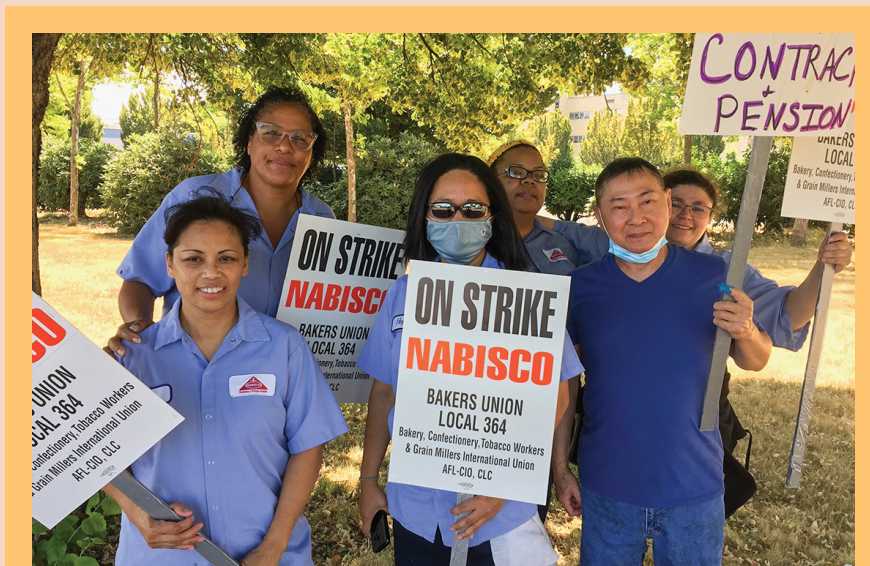
BY DON MCINTOSH

When 210 workers walked out of Nabisco's industrial bakery in Portland, Oregon, in August 2021, they started a strike that would continue for 40 days and spread to 1,000 workers at five locations. From Day One, Portland DSA was in the fight, with a solidarity campaign so successful that other chapters could consider it a template.

Portland DSA member Jamie Partridge, a retired letter carrier and lifelong rank-and-file union activist, visited the picket line within hours of its start to talk with strikers and think about ways to help. He found a racially diverse group of workers who knew what they were fighting for and had strong bonds with one another.

"Half or more of these people had worked together for 20 years," Partridge says. "It was clear to me that people were going to stick this out." Partridge saw favorable conditions that would enable supporters to make an impact:

- **A SUITABLE TARGET** Here was a popular national brand, fresh off a year of record profits, demanding that union members sell out their future coworkers by agreeing to require new hires to pay more than current employees do for health insurance, setting up what's known as a two-tier system. Corporate villainy like that puts public opinion on the side of strikers.
- **A UNION WILLING TO ACCEPT HELP** The Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) International Union had lost half its membership since 2000, owing significantly to offshoring and the collapse of the old Hostess Brands after decades of looting by greedy investors. Now they were in the fight of their lives, the first strike at Nabisco in 50 years, and they hadn't done much preparation.



Nabisco workers on strike in Oregon, August 2021

PHOTOGRAPH BY DON MCINTOSH

- **A WORKFORCE READY TO FIGHT** For strike solidarity to work, strikers must first be willing to fight for themselves. In Portland, they were. Over the course of six weeks, just two workers crossed the picket line. Fifty members of three smaller unions at the Portland plant walked out in solidarity and mostly stayed out. Some union truck and train drivers refused to pick up or deliver. And Nabisco workers in Chicago, Denver, Richmond, and Atlanta, hearing that Portland workers had struck, joined the strike in the weeks that followed.

By the time the strike began, Portland DSA had built a large and spirited Labor Working Group, but the chapter had just had a demoralizing faction fight so acrimonious that the national convention censured and removed some steering committee members as delegates. Now came an urgent campaign that could unite all sides. Members from formerly warring perspectives put aside their differences and came together in a frenzy of organizing.

"These strikers are people who are actively fighting the capitalist class," said Portland DSA co-chair Laura Wadlin.

“They’re removing their labor. And that is just qualitatively different than anything else we typically do in DSA.”

Portland DSA pulled off its first picket line support rally four days into the strike. It continued organizing rallies every Saturday until the end. These were large, morale-boosting rallies, with demonstrators sometimes in the hundreds, attended by DSA members, local union members, and local Democratic elected leaders. At each rally, Portland DSA invited individual strikers to tell their stories publicly. After some rallies, demonstrators marched into local grocery stores to call on shoppers to support the strike by boycotting Nabisco.

Portland DSA also helped set up and promote a GoFundMe campaign to help strikers. Over the next month, supporters contributed over \$90,000, enabling the union to double weekly strike benefits.

The third element of Portland DSA strike support began

one week in, after Nabisco began trying to operate the bakery with outside scabs.

If a strike is a battle, the picket is its front line. Its purpose is to prevent people from crossing it. The word derives from military usage, from the French for a pointed stake held by soldiers at a perimeter. Today’s largely symbolic strike pickets are prevented from accomplishing their true purpose by legal restrictions limiting the number and location of strikers’ pickets and strikers’ conduct. Unions face ruinous fines if strikers violate those restrictions.

But non-striking members of the public aren’t limited by those restrictions. Without any coordination or encouragement from the union, but with the sympathy and appreciation of the striking rank-and-file, direct-action-oriented members of Portland DSA formed a flying squad of strike supporters willing to use their bodies and vehicles to block scabs and company vans and buses from entering and leaving. When scabs gathered at rendezvous points at 5 a.m. or arrived at the bakery, Portland DSA members were there to block their buses—pretending a car had broken down at a parking lot entrance or just standing in the way. In no case did they fully halt the scabs, but they succeeded in delaying scabs’ arrivals and departures. The confrontations, captured on video, were tense and sometimes physical, with security guards and scabs shoving and punching strike supporters. This seemed to escalate toward the final days of the strike, threatening further bad press for Nabisco.

Portland DSA also reached out to DSA chapters at the other striking locations and encouraged strike support. Members of other chapters helped in various ways, suggesting future capacity for DSA to do nationwide strike support for nationwide strikes. The DSA national office boosted strike funds on social media.

In the end, Nabisco dropped its demand for the two-tier wage scale, and the strike ended. The union also made some slight concessions on weekend overtime rules. But don’t think of that as a defeat; strikers don’t. Think of it as a union that risked it all and won back the knowledge of how to fight.

For its exemplary solidarity, Portland DSA earned the gratitude of one union and a reputation in the local union movement as a valuable ally prepared to do whatever it takes. Several strikers joined the chapter. And later, when a much larger strike loomed at Kaiser Permanente, that union invited Portland DSA to speak at its rally and help with strike preparation. 🌹

A HOW-TO GUIDE TO STRIKE SOLIDARITY

Portland DSA co-chair Laura Wadlin—who was once fired for trying to unionize her coworkers—is today active as an officer in her AFT (American Federation of Teachers) local. After the strike ended, Wadlin published a piece on Medium looking at what worked. “A Practical Guide to Strike Solidarity for DSA Members”—online at <https://bit.ly/30QzHpe>—is worth reading.

The short version:

1. Come often, bring energy, make relationships
2. Organize support actions (rallies, picket line shifts, and direct actions and disruptions)
3. Use and build the organizational power of DSA

Occupy's Lasting Legacy

BY CHRIS MAISANO

Occupy Wall Street in 2011 was both exhilarating and frustrating. It captured the attention of millions of people around the world, but it seemed to sabotage itself by refusing to advance a program amid a major capitalist crisis. Along with some fellow DSA members and a scattering of other socialists, I was briefly involved in the Demands Working Group, which sought to remedy this perceived shortcoming.

Our efforts were not well received. The official OWS website denounced us. I recall a memorable exchange I had with a fellow Occupier after a general assembly meeting had rejected a number of our proposals. While we were debating the merits of consensus decision-making, I asked them whether they thought New York City could be run like OWS. “Sure,” they replied, “people can achieve anything they want if they set their minds to it.” I pointed to the bright red sculpture that looms over the park and asked whether someone could jump to the top of it if they just set their mind to it. “Of course,” they replied, “yogis do it all the time.” Then they disappeared into the cold Manhattan night, leaving me baffled and frustrated.

It is hard to convey to newer DSAers how common this type of thinking was at the time. The need to organize politically, to contest elections, and to formulate demands and programs is taken for granted now. It was not always this way. From the end of the sixties through OWS, the Left was dominated by a kind of de facto anarchism. The



On November 15, 2011, tensions ran high as the police evicted Occupy Wall Street protesters and cleaned the park.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID SHANKBONE

“OWS provided a crucial occasion for scattered organizers, thinkers, and activists to meet and build relationships.”

common perception was that none of the existing social institutions—including those that remained from earlier periods of popular struggle—could serve as vehicles of progressive change.

The encampments across the country were exciting places, but they were also plagued by problems that eventually made them unviable. In the immediate wake of the evictions, it was easy to conclude that the phenomenon known as Occupy had wasted its time on the world stage. I certainly felt that way, but my judgment of the experience has softened with time. It’s likely that Bernie Sanders’s attacks on the top 1% would not have found such fertile soil if OWS hadn’t already plowed the ideological ground. More practically, OWS provided a crucial occasion for scattered organizers, thinkers, and activists to meet and build relationships. Here in New York, many of the relationships formed in 2011 helped to undergird the explosive growth of our DSA chapter five years later.

We didn’t know it then, but OWS marked the end of the post-sixties malaise and the start of a new period. Whatever its flaws, it cleared the way for everything since. I still cannot leap to the top of the Zuccotti Park sculpture, no matter how hard I try. But we have a stronger movement because of Occupy, and for that I am profoundly grateful. 🌹

CHRIS MAISANO is an editor of DSA’s *Socialist Forum* and a member of New York City DSA.

POST-ROE IS NOW IN TEXAS

BY KIM VARELA-BROXSON

Since early 2020, I've driven to a local abortion clinic a few times a month. As a member of the Bridge Collective, a practical support abortion fund in Central Texas, it's not unusual for me to pick up a pregnant person an hour away, bring them to their abortion appointment, then have another volunteer drive them home a few hours later. The drive and cost of the procedure are often significant barriers for patients, and abortion funds like ours help low-income people access the health care they deserve.

But I haven't been back to an abortion clinic since September 1, when the Texas law known as SB 8 went into effect.

By now, the world has heard about SB 8. Written by Heritage Foundation lawyers and already being copied in other state legislatures, the draconian law outlaws abortions at six weeks gestation—that means six weeks from the start of the person's previous period. Worse, the bill encourages vigilante enforcement, allowing strangers to sue anyone who "aids and abets" a person getting an abortion after six weeks and to collect a minimum reward of \$10,000 if the lawsuit is successful.

Intentionally vague (what is aiding and abetting?) and a constitutional nightmare, the law was signed by Governor Greg Abbott this spring before going into effect in September.

Despite two separate lawsuits challenging the law, the U.S. Supreme Court has allowed it to go into effect.

Abbott hoped that signing the law would stop all abortion procedures in Texas. He's close to getting his wish. The number of legal abortions performed in Texas in September dropped 50% compared to the same time last year. Most people don't know they are pregnant at six weeks, and self-managed abortion is legally risky, meaning that many must leave the state for care. Depending on where in Texas they live, patients can face up to 12-hour drives to neighboring states—if they can afford the procedure or time off work at all. For undocumented people in the Rio Grande Valley, an area surrounded by highly militarized Border Patrol checkpoints, SB 8 may put legal abortion care completely out of reach.

Out-of-state providers are stepping up as best they can. The two Planned Parenthood clinics in Oklahoma saw 35 patients from Texas between September and November 2020 — and 653 Texans during that same period in 2021.

Overall, Planned Parenthood

reported a 1,082% national increase in patients with Texas ZIP codes seeking care at out-of-state clinics. We are facing compounding crises, as we saw in early September, when Louisiana clinics were shut down due to impacts of Hurricane Ida, and abortion seekers in both states had to delay care. It is time for people to be able to access this time-sensitive, life-saving health care quickly, for free, within their own communities, and to have it protected by federal law.

Abortion funds, especially those in the South, know this. Our clients are overwhelmingly low income, without the luxuries of paid time off, expendable income, or reliable childcare. We've been funding procedures, travel expenses, and even diapers since long before SB 8 went into effect. And for decades we've seen the everyday impacts of the Hyde Amendment, a federal budgetary rider first enacted in 1977 that prohibits Medicaid from covering abortion procedures. The pandemic has worsened the conditions for low-income pregnant people seeking abortions across the country. And yet, the Democratic Party is failing to pass meaningful paid leave or

"It is time for people to be able to access this time-sensitive, life-saving health care quickly, for free, within their own communities, and to have it protected by federal law."

federal abortion legislation, despite controlling Congress and the White House.

Since SB 8 went into effect, DSA members in Texas have worked alongside abortion funds to make clear that the fight for abortion is inextricably tied to the fights for economic, racial, and gender justice. The North Texas Afro-Socialist and Socialists of Color Caucus collaborated with the Afiya Center and other BIPOC-led groups to hold the Dallas Reproductive Liberation March in early October. “We have to take on white supremacy, while still fighting for bodily autonomy,” North Texas Afro-Soc member Radiance Bean said, tying SB 8 to the murder of Breonna Taylor. “We have to be fighting for these issues collectively—fighting for reproductive justice, racial justice, against police brutality—together.” Austin DSA members, linking the fight against SB 8 to the fight against police, also crowd canvassed at the Austin Women’s March to encourage voters to reject

a right-wing backed ballot measure to permanently increase the Austin Police Department’s annual budget. They carried “Reproductive Justice NOW!” posters and had socialist feminist zines and abortion resource stickers.

Houston DSA marched with a banner proudly declaring “Free Abortion On Demand Without Apology.” In each city, DSA members demanded abortion justice. Now we need to build the movement to win it.

Internationally, we’ve seen the expansion of abortion rights in countries where organizers built strong mass movements that mobilized to pressure lawmakers and the judiciary into ceding to their demands. As this article goes to print, the U.S. Supreme Court has yet to grant any relief for Texans regarding SB 8. Regardless of what they decide on this bill, though, their inaction toward protecting our right to abortion shows that we need to build a mass movement to defend and expand abortion rights.

We must tie the fight for abortion with the rest of our work. The spring Fund-a-Thon (March-May), which DSA conducts every year to aid abortion access, is a great opportunity to raise money for local abortion funds. It also provides an opportunity to talk with people about Medicare for All and health justice and invite them in to build power with us. We must organize nationwide for free childcare, highlighting the failure of the Democrats to deliver for working-class parents. And as we’ve seen from our comrades in Latin America, we must be in the streets demanding an end to the violence against the working class, fighting for the world we deserve. 🌹

KIM VARELA-BROXSON is an abortion fund volunteer, reproductive nonprofit worker, and Austin DSA member. (To get involved with the Abortion Fund-a-Thon, DSA members can email the Socialist Feminist Working Group at SocialistFeminism@dsausa.org.)



Austin DSA at Womens March 2021

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANA PEREZ

GLOBAL GREEN NEW DEAL OR A NEW COLD WAR?

BY TOBITA CHOW

ILLUSTRATION BY GERARD DALBON

The future of humanity is threatened by two great—and intertwined—challenges: the climate crisis and the escalating great-power conflict between the United States and China. In order to overcome the climate crisis, we must replace great-power conflict with global cooperation. This will be particularly important when it comes to addressing global climate injustice, a crucial but frequently overlooked part of the struggle to end the climate crisis.

To overcome the climate crisis, we need a radical transformation of the global economy. A good model is a Global Green New Deal: the extension of the principles of the Green New Deal across borders. This would include the creation of a global clean energy economy that generates abundant good, green jobs in all countries, led by public investment. Although this would not yet be a post-capitalist global society, it would create better conditions to build more powerful socialist movements worldwide.

A Global Green New Deal is necessary in order to end the current conflict between economic development and climate action in the Global South, where the need for economic development is pressing and strong climate policies can make scarce opportunities for development seem even scarcer. Creating new green jobs in all countries would also eliminate the sense that workers in different countries are trapped in a zero-sum competition for scarce jobs, a mindset that underlies much of the popular support for dangerous nationalist politics in the United States and around the world.

But a Global Green New Deal cannot take shape without global cooperation. It requires transfers of both capital and technology from the countries rich in assets to the countries of the Global South that have been blocked from accessing these resources (or robbed of them) through

decades of neoliberalism and generations of colonialism and imperialism. Such transfers are also matters of justice: of reparations owed by higher-income countries to lower-income countries that have contributed the least to climate change but suffer its worst impacts.

The United States and China could accelerate progress toward a Global Green New Deal if they could work together. The two countries have respective strengths when it comes to clean technology: The United States is the world leader in research, while China is the world leader in building the industrial capacity to produce a wide range of important clean energy technologies. The United States is also the center of global finance capital and a powerful network of international alliances, while China is the top financier of infrastructure projects across much of the Global South through the Belt and Road Initiative. There is much to criticize about these aspects of both countries, but realistically, these are necessary building blocks of a Global Green New Deal.

Unfortunately, the escalating U.S.-China conflict leads in the wrong direction. As recently as two years ago, China expressed willingness to engage with the United States to provide clean energy technology and financing for Global South countries, but these overtures were blocked by the Trump administration. Now, through legislation such as the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, which passed the Senate this June, both parties in Congress are continuing down the path of blocking any such cooperation with China.

In addition to undermining the prospect of cooperation, the zero-sum logic of great-power conflict encourages countries to invest in weapons of war rather than the tools we need to save us all from the climate crisis. This path leads not only to continuing climate change but also

the widespread violations of human rights we can expect from escalating nationalist conflict, proxy wars, or even the nightmare scenario of direct warfare between the United States and China. Already, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are caught up in an arms race, empowering nationalists, militarists, and heavy-industry polluters across borders, at the expense of the progressive forces in each country that support the most aggressive action on climate change. As I write this, the U.S. Senate is looking to pass one of the largest military budgets in history, based primarily on the supposed threat of China, with the Biden White House reportedly refusing to entertain questions about military spending because they are “petrified of being seen as soft on China.” Meanwhile, key climate provisions have been cut from both the bipartisan infrastructure deal and even from the Build Back Better package, which together are a fraction of the size of the military budget.

We face two potential paths. One, based on global cooperation to build a Global Green New Deal, leads us to a more just and sustainable world. The other leads us to

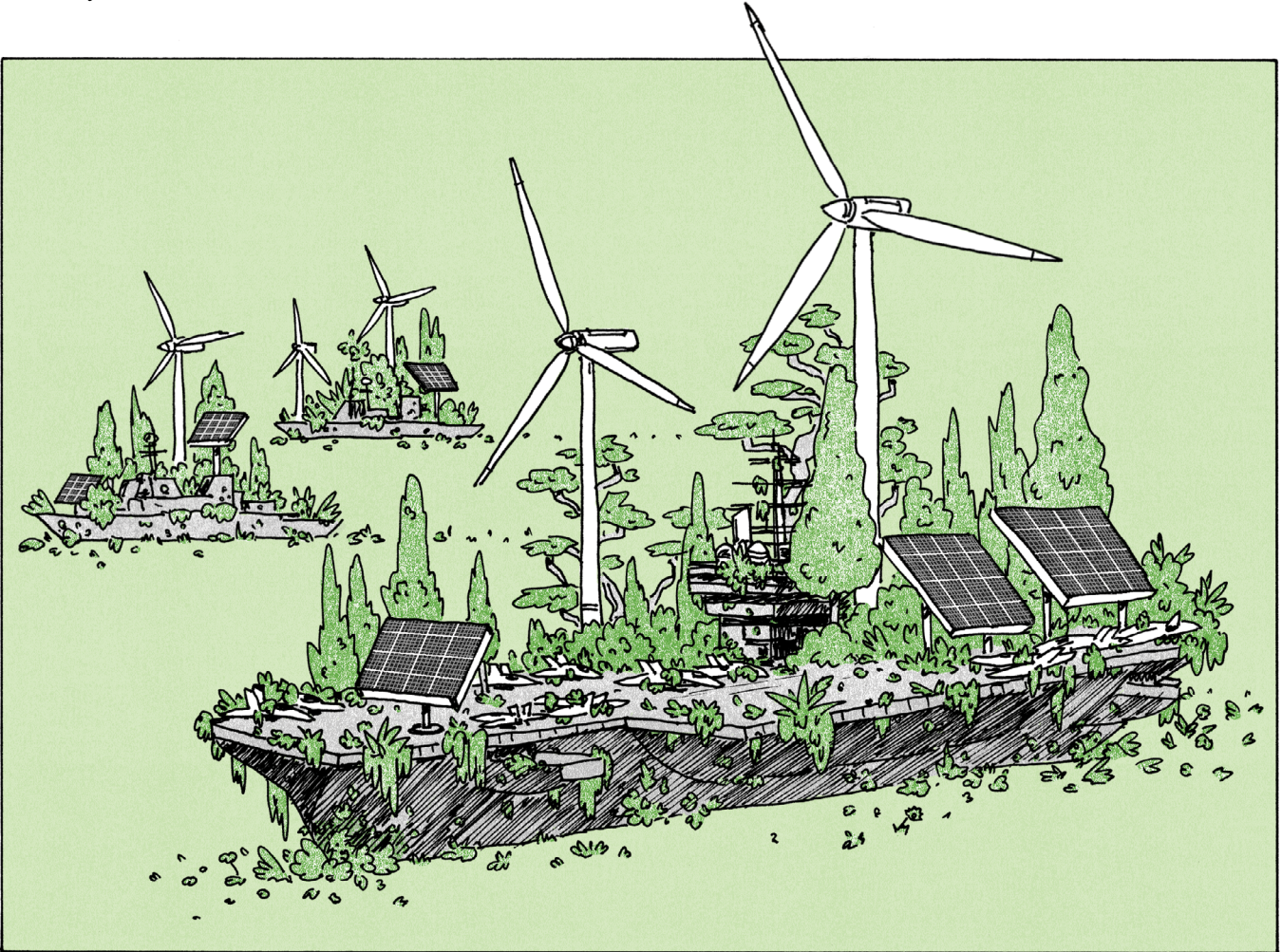
mounting calamities from both climate change and nationalist conflict. The vast majority of the U.S. foreign policy establishment is organized around the second path. One of the tasks of the U.S. Left is to build the power necessary to force them to come to their senses and replace those who refuse to do so. 🌹

TOBITA CHOW is the Director of Justice Is Global, a special project of People’s Action.

For more analysis of the U.S.-China conflict, its root causes, and other difficult questions, including the need to continue to address human rights abuses in China while building U.S.-China cooperation, see “U.S.-China: Progressive Internationalist Strategy Under Biden” by Tobita Chow and Jake Werner, published by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung NYC,

<https://rosalux.nyc/us-china-progressive-internationalist-strategy/>.

To voice your opposition to the new cold war and the USICA, sign on to the DSA open letter to Congress at dsaic.org/oppose-usica. Check out the DSA International Committee’s webinar with Vijay Prashad, Tings Chak, and Richard Wolff at youtu.be/oBqNTK9mPuQ. —Eds.





NEW COLD WAR ENDANGERS ACTIVISTS IN HONG KONG

BY FURQAN BAHADUR

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union had terrible consequences for those caught up in it. History does not repeat, but it does rhyme. The next cold war is upon us: The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States are now competing for hegemony over the Pacific. Despite the climate crisis and the global pandemic, the two most powerful countries on earth would rather test hypersonic missiles and conduct naval exercises than work together to prevent our collective annihilation.

This new cold war has already had profound implications for those caught in the crossfire. Nowhere is this truer than in Hong Kong. After a proposed extradition bill threatened Hong Kong's autonomy within the PRC in late 2019, millions took to the city's streets to protest. The resulting movement has since faltered, with the Chinese state accelerating Hong Kong's integration with mainland China by introducing a repressive national security law and lambasting protesters as secessionists and Western puppets. The U.S. Left has largely accepted that narrative and dismissed the movement as reactionary.

Hong Kong Protest

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX YUN

Democratic Left spoke with a member of the Lausan Collective, one of the left-wing activist groups aiming to disrupt U.S. and Chinese narratives about Hong Kong. Let's call them X. When street protests erupted in 2019, images of Hong Kongers waving U.S. flags and shouting Trump slogans alienated U.S. leftists. But as X attested, this was only half of the story. The protests were not ideologically coherent: Participants were "primarily driven by a yearning for more thorough democratic reforms" and by economic anxieties. Figures on the U.S. Right did not care about Hong Kong, and it was a mistake to allow them to control the narrative. X noted, "The [U.S.] state will exploit anything in its rivalry with China, and the Chinese state will use whatever means to push back." While the U.S. government used the Hong Kong protests to bolster its campaign against the PRC, the U.S. Left ignored the movement's real strengths, including the creation of new labor unions and a fluid organizational structure that allowed them

to build solidarity across diverse social groups.

X argues that U.S. socialists' lack of attention to Hong Kong is due to a fundamental misunderstanding. Unlike the first Cold War, this cold war is not an ideological contest; despite tensions between them, the United States and the PRC are both oppressive, capitalist countries. Our options on the Left are not limited to heralding the Chinese state as anti-imperialist or justifying U.S. intervention. Socialists must support "those [who are] exploited and oppressed." The only alternative to the new cold war is building solidarity between social movements and turning our individual weaknesses into collective strength. Hong Kong's complex ideological landscape is thus a test for DSA: Can we offer solidarity to potential allies—or only judgment? 🌀

FURQAN BAHADUR is the pseudonym of a writer based in Chicago.

BERLIN HOUSING VICTORY BUOYS CAMPAIGNERS

BY DAVID ISELIN-RICKETTS

In September, more than a million Berliners voted “yes” on a referendum calling on Berlin’s legislature to pass a law socializing the housing stock of all landlords who own more than 3,000 units. If the legislature were to do so, some 240,000 apartments, or 11% of rentals, would be expropriated by the city. Although the prospects for implementation remain complicated, the “Expropriation” campaign’s victory at the polls shows what organized tenants can do.

The referendum, which passed with 57.4% of the vote, came after a decade of organizing against displacement and rapidly rising rents in the city, processes accelerated by the short-sighted sale of a significant amount of public housing in the 2000s. Frustrated by state inaction in the face of expiring subsidized housing contracts and the recent constitutional court ruling against a Berlin rent cap, housing activists

coalesced around the citizens’ initiative Deutsche Wohnen & Co Enteignen.

The initiative’s name and rhetoric singled out Berlin’s largest and most notorious landlord, Deutsche Wohnen, and invoked the historically charged and attention-grabbing slogan: *Enteignen* (expropriate). The referendum is anchored in the German constitution: Article 14, which allows for expropriation for the common good, and the as-yet-untested Article 15, which allows for nationalization, formed the basis for the referendum. The challenge now is for the referendum to lead to more than a symbolic victory.

The campaign shied away from a binding referendum on a fully formulated bill because it would have risked disqualification by the baroque, often contradictory mesh of Berlin, German, and European Union law, opting instead for a “resolution referendum,” which now requires further cooperation from the city government.

Berliners voted for the referendum across party lines. However, they also elected parties to the municipal government that oppose implementing the referendum. To enforce the popular mandate, the expropriation movement will have to convert the organized networks, know-how, and raised expectations generated by the campaign into pro-renter institutional power.

Roughly a quarter of Berlin’s 3.6 million residents lack German citizenship and were ineligible to vote in the referendum. Lack of voting rights didn’t stop the (unofficial) DSA Berlin from doing what it could to aid the referendum, while at the same time agitating for voting rights and tying our work to housing struggles in the United States.

DSA Berlin members translated campaign literature, turned out for poster-hanging events and demonstrations and, most important, helped collect the 350,000 signatures that secured the referendum.

Although DSA Berlin’s role in the referendum campaign was modest, our participation gave us confidence in our ability to make contributions to, and integrate with, local struggles and political structures. The opportunity to have thousands of meaningful conversations about a bold and realistic proposal with our loved ones, neighbors, and co-workers has been enormously educational and heartening. The fight continues! 🌹



DSA Berlin organizing for expropriation

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAX RABUS

DAVID ISELIN-RICKETTS is a Berliner and steering committee member of the city’s (unofficial) DSA chapter.

COMRADE DU BARD & Marx for the Masses

BY BRITTE RASMUSSEN MARSH

ILLUSTRATION BY SIERRA ROMESBURG

If you were among those at last summer's DSA National Convention, you may have watched a virtual staged production of Marx in SoHo by Howard Zinn that offered eight Comrade Karls and explored the exciting possibilities about what constitutes "political education." In this article, the play's director describes the process and ways in which local chapters can use the play in real time. —Eds.

Why does cultural work matter for movement building on the Left? Why produce a play for a political convention at all?

Cultural historian Johan Huizinga once said, "The eternal gulf between being and idea can only be bridged by the rainbow of imagination." A comrade of mine put this into plainer words: "You can point people to that bridge of imagination, but you can't walk it for them." They have to opt in. So how does one single, fragile, human psyche stand before the miseries of this world and choose to step forward? To fight?

In order to become agents of change, we have to become the heroes of our own narratives. We must engage in radical imagination—through art and music and theater and the humanities—to engineer ways across that bridge of imagination. Socialists have manifested this idea across the ages: the Berliner Ensemble, the Federal Theater, the Negro Ensemble Company, the Free Southern Theater, El Teatro Campesino, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and Bread and Puppet Theater.

In June 2021, when I pitched my proposal to host a virtual staged reading of a play to the DSA National Political Education Committee, its members voted on which play to produce. Out of 15 choices, *Marx in SoHo* received the most votes. I was thrilled by this selection, for reasons a previous director, Anthony Arnone, stated in his 1999 curtain speech: "[By the 90s,] people around the world were once again loudly announcing the death of socialism. . . . We were told that the U.S. had eliminated any ideological alternative to free market capitalism, as written by the *New York Times*. . . . But Howard Zinn, rightly

as he did throughout his life, rejected all this as nonsense. He knew that capitalism again would go into crisis and that people would look for alternatives, as we have dramatically seen across the globe over the past many years."

And this is where our story begins: Karl Marx has come back from the dead for one night only, and he has a lot to say. With permission from the folks at Howard Zinn's estate, I decided to divide the title role into eight parts for eight actors. Each actor answered the casting call that I sent to DSA chapters across the country; each actor experimented with and rehearsed a unique take on the voice, mannerisms, and messages of Marx, and they all streamed in live, to the "stage," from their homes across the country.



The reception of the show was evident in the livestream comments. There were ample “Bravo!”s, but the most promising statements were the ones in which an audience member connected the dots between theory and reality, as only the humanities can enable us to do. “The part about the Paris Commune really shook me, comrades,” wrote Jake E. He was referring to this part of the monologue: “[In 1871] the people of Paris formed not a government, but something more glorious, something governments everywhere fear, a commune, the collective energy of the people.... It lived only a few months. But it was the first legislative body in history to represent the poor. Its laws were for them. It abolished their debts, postponed their rents, forced the pawnshops to return their most needed possessions.” It’s moments like this that allow us to expand our own protagonism for a better world.

Because the show generated a buzz within the comrade-thespian populace of Portland DSA, Comrade du Bard is revitalizing Marx in Soho for an in-person event. Mark your calendars! This spring: a “Marx Crawl”! Eight Marxes, eight strategic street-stages in downtown Portland, with a DSA working group tabling at each location. Imagine being a DSA member at your table, talking with a pedestrian who isn’t really on board with your messaging. You have the option to say, “Don’t believe me? That’s alright. Why don’t you hear from Karl himself? He’ll be here in about five minutes.” Each Marx will also have the option of inviting audience members “on stage”—atop a traveling soapbox—to speak extemporaneously. It’s a living, breathing work of political education. It’s authentic and real and really fun!

As socialist-democrats, we are tasked with doing so much “un-fun” but crucial work in the movement. But by engaging in a radical theater practice, we can re-introduce ourselves to one another under a unifying goal that’s creative, impactful, and enjoyable.

If this message of engaging in a radical theater practice speaks to you, reach out to us via email at comradedubard@gmail.com or here at tinyurl.com/Bardmail.

All the world’s a stage, and we are the players. For the bards! For the planet! For the love! 🌹

BRITTE RASMUSSEN MARSH, the director of the virtual staged reading of *Marx in SoHo*, is a proud member of Portland, Oregon DSA and the National Political Education Committee. With her new socialist theater project, Comrade du Bard, her goal is to produce a national tour of *Marx in Soho*, enact workshops of Theatre of the Oppressed, and write home-grown rad plays.

We Join DSA to Organize

(Continued from page 2)

just reacting to these kinds of developments by mobilizing in the moment—we’re looking ahead to think strategically and organize in preparation for things like the Teamsters contract with UPS, which expires in 2023. The fact that a reform slate won the Teamsters election means we can expect escalating strike preparation alongside the union’s campaign to organize Amazon.

Hard times are coming, but with comrades we can fight back. Here’s one more hopeful story about the next generation of socialist organizers. In November, the Young Democratic Socialists of America chapter at Howard University won a major victory in a campaign to improve learning and living conditions on campus. A chapter at Oakland University in Michigan helped elect a city councilor, and it and chapters at the University of California Berkeley, New York University, Alma College, Harvard University, and others have mobilized in strike solidarity.

As we head into 2022, DSA’s 40th anniversary year, let’s resolve to be strategic, long distance runners for socialism. 🌹

DSA BY THE NUMBERS

In summer of 2021, the Growth and Development Committee surveyed our members. Some 12,971 members filled out the survey, about 14% of our 95,000 total membership. The results are not scientific but give us some clues about who we are.

DSA members who filled out the survey are

- **Young** (median age is 33)
- **Urban** (57%), **Suburban** (34%), **and Rural** (9%)
- **College Educated** (of those 25+, 80% of us have a bachelor’s degree, and 35% have a graduate degree)
- **White** (77%), **Multi-ethnic** (9%), **Hispanic** (9%), **Asian** (5%), **Black** (4%), **Middle Eastern** (2%), **and Native American** (2%)
- **Male** (64%), **Female** (27%), **and Non-Binary** (10%)
- **New to the organization** (51% joined in 2020 or 2021, 6% before 2016)

And our top priorities are

Climate Change • Medicare for All • Labor Solidarity

For complete survey results, go to <https://bit.ly/3qLDAXI>

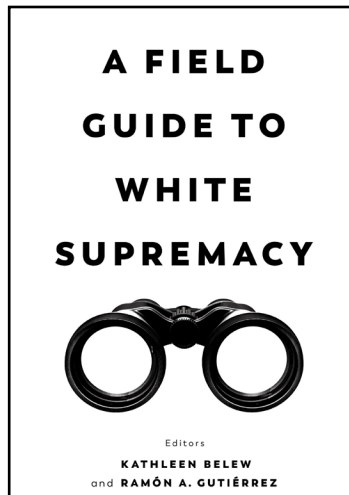
WHITE SUPREMACY: CONNECTING THE DOTS

BY CHRIS LOMBARDI

When I first heard about *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*, I knew it would be important. Its co-editor, Kathleen Belew, is the author of *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*—a history of how Vietnam veterans mid-wifed the white power movement that burst forth in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Belew emphasized that the white power movement is a still-living phenomenon: We all saw that truth on January 6, 2021, as Confederate flags mixed with Trump flags and the criminals beating up Capitol police officers were allowed to just go home, cloaked in white privilege.

It's no surprise that Belew testified before Congress a week later and in Charlottesville in November 2021 on behalf of those injured during the 2017 "Unite the Right" march. She has long taught us that white supremacy is the ideology behind all the faux grassroots concerns spouted by those in power, and that the white power movement's distortion of populism is much more dangerous than people realize.

Now, Belew and University of Chicago historian Ramón A. Gutiérrez have given us this *Field Guide*, which could be the most important piece of political education you'll read this year. They've amassed brilliant thinkers and authors, starting with its history "Building, Protecting, and Profiting from Whiteness." After sections on "Iterations of White Supremacy" and "Anti-Immigrant Nation," it



A Field Guide to White Supremacy

Kathleen Belew and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, eds.
University of California Press, 2021

returns to our current five-alarm-fire moment, with "White Supremacy from Fringe to Mainstream." DSA chapters can—and maybe should—go through this book section by section, starting with Doug Kiel's exploration of settler colonialism and backlash against Indigenous movements. From misogyny/femicide to anti-Asian and homophobic violence, DSAers could discuss all the ways white supremacy manifests in daily life. We also can and should discuss the differing meanings of white supremacy and white power, as the latter movement fights to entrench the former.

Still with me, a week after reading,

are thoughts of Joseph Darda's "The Whiteness of Blue Lives: Race in American Policing" and Belew's final chapter, "There Are No Lone Wolves: The White Power Movement at War." I wouldn't eliminate a single one of these essays, even as I might have wanted more on racism in the military. Don't miss Jamelle Bouie's meditation on lynching, Judith Butler's on anti-Semitism, or Croix Saffin's lyrical call to action on behalf of Black trans women and femmes.

Marxist analysis permeates every page, as we see how the economic violence of capitalism buttresses the victimizers. Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor, whose *Race for Profit* I briefly reviewed for DL a year ago, skewers our racist culture's pathologizing of the Black family as she outlines what white supremacist economics has done to actual Black families.

I'm writing this review soon after the November election, which almost cartoonishly demonstrated how tightly the powerful hold to white supremacy: The Virginia governor's race capitalized on white voters' fear of even the gentlest discussions about racial injustice. This book is anything but gentle. It is an essential component in every strategic plan we make for the future. 🌹

CHRIS LOMBARDI is a member of the *Democratic Left* editorial team and author of *I Ain't Marching Anymore: Dissenters, Deserters, and Objectors to America's Wars*. She lives in Philadelphia.

WHAT WAS CAPITALISM?

BY SANJIV GUPTA

In 1888, in Edward Bellamy's best-selling novel Looking Backward, a time-traveler wakes in the year 2000 to a socialist utopia. A recently discovered manuscript—this one from the future—describes for people of the year 2176 what life was like in the 2000s. Written by the Earth History Collective, it was retrieved by Sanjiv Gupta of the DSA National Political Education Committee. —Eds

Capitalism was dominant for several centuries. Today, it seems alien, even abhorrent: How could people have lived like that? Yet capitalism trained millions of people to work together to do amazing things, like doubling the average human lifespan. But only a few people reaped most of its benefits. This created a vast gap between its promises and its realities, reflected in everyday experiences with money, work, time, and freedom.

Money: Today, money is a convenient tool for keeping track of our resources and wealth and for planning for future needs. Under capitalism, money was the ultimate measure of the value of all things, even of people. Most people did not have enough because a few had too much.

Work: Today, we understand work to be the use of our bodies and minds to satisfy our natural curiosity, create beauty, and nurture our children. We like being pleasantly depleted by work and then returning to it after rest and renewal. Under capitalism, most people “worked for money” in order to live. And by working, they

made the already wealthy even richer. They also did “unpaid” work, such as caring for their young, old, and sick. Today, we understand most work to be about caring for something or someone.

Time: Today, we understand time as the marker of change in all things. That includes ourselves: We exist for a finite time. During this time we work to increase our own, and others’, health and happiness and to enjoy our existence. Under capitalism, most people’s time was structured by their need to work for money. They could only spend time on other things—even caring for their young—during their “time off” from this work.

Freedom: Today, we understand freedom as our ability to choose what we do with our finite time, to choose our work and our pleasures. Under capitalism, most people’s freedom was limited by where and to whom they were born. Only a few escaped this tyranny of chance. Today, we understand that for any of us to be free, all of us must be free. This requires us to decide together how we use our resources and the fruits of our collective labor.


It’s hard to believe that our practices and conceptions of money, work, time, and freedom were considered revolutionary during capitalism. Yet capitalism itself was once revolutionary. It destroyed earlier, seemingly permanent ways of life, such as caste and slavery. But it concentrated the means of producing wealth in the hands of a few. When the vast

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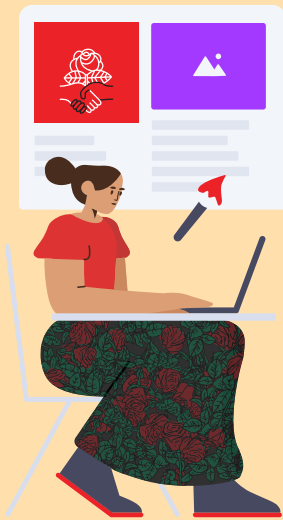
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majority took over these resources, it cleared the way for everyone to decide the content of their existence. It made it possible for all of us, today, to be free. 

ABOUT THE COVER ART

This was the year that working people went on the offensive, with strikes, solidarity, and support actions. Across the country, we refused to take it anymore. The Nabisco strike was but one example (see p. 3). The struggle continues, and DSA is in it. Here's to more victories in 2022!

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