



Democratic Socialists of America

Greater Detroit Newsletter

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CAMPAIGN TO MAKE IMMIGRATION REFORM A TOP ISSUE IN 2010

IMMIGRATION MATTERS

New America Media, Commentary,

Rich Stolz, Posted: Oct 18, 2009

Last Tuesday, October 13, immigrant families from around the country gathered to join in a vigil and rally in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC., where Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez and other elected officials launched a new push for comprehensive immigration reform, building to the opening months of 2010. Our banners read “Reform Immigration FOR Families” and “Family Unity Cannot Wait.”

More than 750 people traveled to Washington on buses from up and down the Eastern seaboard and as far away as Texas, Florida, Ohio, Minnesota, and Michigan. They spent Tuesday morning meeting with Congressional offices before being joined by thousands of people from the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area, who gathered on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol to listen to testimonies from families, veterans, and children who face family disintegration because of immigration laws and deportation.

It was a beautiful warm afternoon for prayers, singing and chanting. Religious leaders from a diverse array of faith traditions around the country, some organized through Familias Unidas, were called by their faith to D.C. to lead the gathered in

Agenda for November 7th DSA General Membership Meeting

Join us on November 7th for our next DSA general membership meeting. Our speaker will be Representative Alma Wheeler Smith who will discuss her campaign for Governor of the State of Michigan.

- 1) Treasury Report
- 2) Report on Jobs with Justice (JWJ)
- 3) Report on Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network (MichUHCAN)
- 4) Report on Michigan Alliance to Strengthen Social Security and Medicare (MASSM)
- 5) Report on Detroit Area Peace with Justice Network (DAPJN)
- 6) Report on DSA Education Committee
- 7) Resolution on Immigration Reform—Dave Ivers
- 8) Speaker: Alma Wheeler Smith on 2010 Gubernatorial Campaign

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prayers. Families who traveled for days were joined by families from the area, sharing not only the moment, but also their personal stories that underscore the urgency for real, just, and humane immigration reform.

At the event Congressman Gutierrez outlined a set of principles for progressive immigration reform that needs to include a rational and humane approach to legalize the undocumented population, to protect workers' rights, to allocate sufficient visas, to establish a smarter and more humane border enforcement policy, to promote integration of immigrant communities, to include the DREAM Act and AgJOBS bills, to protect rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and to keep families together.

The lawmakers who joined Rep. Gutierrez on stage, and addressed the gathering included Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chairwoman Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Chairman Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA), Congressional Progressive Caucus Chairs Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ) and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), Congressional Black Caucus Member, Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Democratic Caucus Vice Chair Xavier Becerra (D-CA), Jared Polis (D-CO), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Mike Quigley (D-IL), and Delegate Gregorio Sablan (Northern Mariana Islands).

In the middle of the crowd, there was a girl who had come to D.C. with her mother from a community in Ohio, devastated by the deportations tearing families apart. She stood holding a large drawing of her father and her friends' parents who have been taken away. She came to Washington wanting to give her drawing to the president's children, to ask them to tell their father, to plead with them, that she wanted her own father back.

This girl's story demonstrates why so many people came to Washington, D.C., and why on the same day, so many communities held events in Arkansas, Arizona,

California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nevada, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

All of these events, taken together, demonstrate a fierce urgency for change. In 2006, across the country, immigrant families and communities mobilized and millions of us marched. Yet, we lost the fight in Congress for immigration reform. We demonstrated our numbers, but we didn't focus our power, and though we pushed a reform bill through the Senate, our efforts ended in stalemate with the likes of Rep. Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and HR 4437. In 2007, we made another run at reform, but our energies were sapped by backroom negotiations and we were overwhelmed and out-organized by our opponents' ability to generate calls to members of Congress by a factor of 100.

Since then, we have been fighting increased immigration raids and the expansion of failed enforcement policies that have forced immigrant communities to live in fear. Since 2006, communities have also been engaging in unprecedented civic participation. With successful voter education and voter registration efforts, immigrant communities across the country demonstrated the power of immigrant voters, accounting for the difference in key states and congressional districts around the country in the elections last year.

In June, we launched the Reform Immigration FOR America campaign. The FOR America campaign brings together a very broad coalition of community and faith organizations, labor unions, civil rights and advocacy organizations from around the country. The FOR America campaign is engaged in actions around the country, encouraging all who care to participate. Using new technological tools, anyone can get connected and participate, simply by signing up for text alerts on a

cell phone. By sending the text message, “justice” in English or “justicia” in Spanish to 69866, anyone, anywhere can begin receiving campaign updates and participate in national calls to Congress or the president, to push for immigration reform.

We are building strength, and as more and more families and individuals get involved and more and more communities across the country stand together and act together, united in common purpose for our families, our friends, our communities, we will be able to end the tearing apart of our families. We will not only be able to take advantage of the opportunity to move Congress to pass immigration reform in the spring, but we will also be able to make the United States live up to its own ideals as the land of liberty and opportunity.

Rich Stolz is campaign manager with Reform Immigration FOR America.

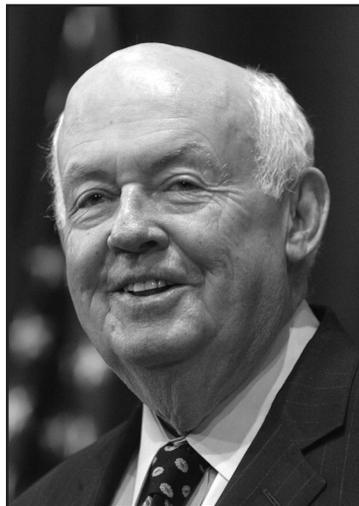
John Sweeney Retires

By Helen R. Samberg

Since early childhood, as a working class, union-conscious person, John Sweeney has never forsaken workers.

As a college graduate with a degree in economics, he began his career as a researcher with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). From there, he went to the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) where he was a contract director. He rose through the ranks of SEIU to become its president. In 1993, under Sweeney’s leadership, the SEIU had more than one million members—the first AFL-CIO union to reach that mark in over 20 years.

In February 1995, the AFL-CIO President, Lane Kirkland, came under heavy criticism from the union leadership for his apparent lack of interest in organizing more workers. Because of his non-combative personality, John Sweeney was selected by this group to ask Kirkland to resign. Kirkland refused. However, the pressure for Kirkland’s resignation became so great that he did resign on August 1, 1995. Sweeney was elected president in October 1995 at the AFL-CIO national convention. Sweeney remained president for fourteen years, retiring in September 2009. Under his leadership, the AFL-CIO never veered from fighting for a living wage and fair working conditions for its members.



Today, the AFL-CIO has once again become a force for social progress. It now has a membership that reflects this. Prior to Sweeney, 26% of the AFL-CIO membership was composed of minorities and women. Today, 60% of the membership is comprised of minorities and women.

John Sweeney has always been proud of his membership in DSA. He made the following statement recently: “ In the midst of the current economic crisis, DSA is politically and morally indispensable. I have always

admired and supported DSA, but never more so than when it has consistently spoken out and struggled against the Bush Administration’s ruinous economic policies and its battles against working families and their unions and its disastrous war in Iraq that has been based on a long series of lies to the American people.”

We in the Metropolitan Detroit DSA wish John Sweeney all the best in retirement. He has earned and deserves it. We feel certain that we shall hear more from him in his quest to make this a better world.

As an active member of AFL-CIO/ AFSCME, Local 1640 for more than 30 years, I am proud to have been under Sweeney’s leadership.

On the Ground, On the Border

A Report from Charlie & Jean Dietrick Rooney

Like most, we didn't have a clear idea what to expect when we volunteered to work with the Arizona immigrant rescue group "No More Deaths" two years ago. From the time we moved to southern Arizona for the winter months starting in 2005, we realized that the loss of life of the "undocumented immigrants" in the Sonoran Desert between Tucson and the Mexican border was shockingly high. Every week, the Arizona Daily Star carried stories of 2, or 3, or 6, or more, bodies found in the desert. We decided to join the hundreds of citizens who form a widespread border justice community in Tucson.

Some of the most shocking realities that we soon confronted:

- In 2008, despite billions of dollars spent to enforce control of the border, the number of undocumented immigrants reached all-time highs
- The number of undocumented sent back to Mexico surpassed 380,000 in 2008. Those were only the ones apprehended. Experts estimated that 3 times that number eluded detection. That is, more than 1 million!
- Since the mid-1990's, it is likely that more than 10,000 immigrants have died in the desert. Starting in 2000, the number skyrocketed. Prior to the mid-90s, the numbers were dramatically lower
- The policy that caused this dramatic change was the conscious decision to "funnel" immigrants away from cities and roads, toward some of the most barren, and therefore dangerous, desert in the U.S.
- Women are a growing percentage of the immigration, and a growing number are sexually abused on the journey – now they begin taking contraceptives before embarking on the journey

We joined "NoMoreDeaths" (www.NoMoreDeaths.org), originally a faith-based group that was formed in 2003 after several years of dramatic increases in the number of deaths. Some of the key members of NMD had been founders/activists in the Sanctuary Movement

of the 1980s. They were experienced in struggling with U.S. government policy, as well as the right-wing fringe groups that populate the Arizona landscape. They have chosen to be direct, peaceful, and public in their challenge to these elements. We became aware of them through their highly publicized campaign in 2005-6 "Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime" when the government chose to prosecute two young volunteers for escorting a perilously ill migrant to a hospital. The support campaign drew international attention and pressured the government to drop the charges.

The major efforts of NMD are overt challenges to government policy in the form of direct aid and acts of civil disobedience. A primitive camp has been established in the heart of the desert close to the border, where dozens of volunteers (mostly in their 20s and 30s) live for weeks, especially in the summer months, in the heat of the desert, and daily walk the trails that migrants are known to follow. They distribute water and emergency food and medicine, and rescue those who are unable to continue. The logistics of supplying and supporting those volunteers is a major challenge for 20-30 other volunteers. 25-35 volunteers meet every Monday for two hours to make policy decisions based on a complete consensus model. At least half of these members are under 40, and most spend several hours more on additional NMD work during the week. They do such services as "water drops," court watching, gather migrant testimonies for reports, work at a medical aid station in Nogales, MX.

The highest profile challenge to government policy during the past year were highly publicized acts of civil disobedience, distributing water in the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, a 400 square mile area in the path of busy migration routes. In early 2009, Walt Staton, a 27 year old volunteer was ticketed for distributing capped gallon bottles of water in the Refuge, despite the fact that he was collecting trash when ticketed. Refusing to plead guilty for providing humanitarian aid, Walt's ticket was escalated to a "criminal misdemeanor" for "consciously littering." His high-profile trial and sentence, and a resulting editorial in the New York Times, led to a meeting with the Secretary of the Interior. When the Wildlife Refuge administration continued to stonewall NMD demands for negotiations

to work out a compromise that would protect human life, NMD decided to continue humanitarian aid with a high profile act of civil disobedience. This resulted in 13 members (including one of the writers) distributing water, followed by the Refuge police who then ticketed them for littering. The prosecution of these “litterati” (otherwise known as the “Basura 13” (Spanish for trash)) has been in negotiation for many months.

Ultimately, the solution to this tragic situation is correcting the cruel trade policies that drive hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans to risk their lives because they cannot support their families in their homeland. The most obvious targets for DSA members here in Michigan are (1) renegotiation of NAFTA and CAFTA, the so-called “free” trade treaties; and (2) a reasonable and humane immigration policy. These political challenges have a very human face for us after 2 years on the ground, on

the border.

In the short term, financial support for the all-volunteer efforts of enormous self-sacrificing “No More Deaths” volunteers is badly needed. The costs of provisioning the primitive desert camp in Arivaca AZ that supports dozens of volunteers; supporting a medical aid station on the border; providing 2,500 gallons of water per month; repairing 3 battered trucks to transport volunteers hundreds of miles over unimaginably rutted roads (\$3,000 is needed right now) – these are just a few of the costs of resistance. Please consider sending a Tax-Deductible check payable to (our fiduciary): “Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson” [Memo line: No More Deaths], PO Box 40782, Tucson AZ 85717. Include your email address to receive updates.

City & Suburbs Fight To Keep Melba Davis In Her Foreclosed Home

By David Ivers

The sidewalks were full of picketers on September 29 in Grosse Pointe Woods. They were there to protest against Wachovia Securities for the attempted eviction of Belva Davis who has lost her home to foreclosure.

Months ago Belva was laid-off from her job. She got behind on mortgage payments on her beautiful brick home in Detroit’s East English Village. Wachovia Securities, a Wells Fargo Company, aggressively moved to evict her. Belva was fortunate to be able to find a new job. This should be the happy ending, but Wells Fargo refused to work with her, or modify the loan. Vacant homes are being stripped every day in Detroit, and the thieves are being aided and abetted by Wells Fargo.

Union activists who lived in her neighborhood learned of her problems and came to Jobs With Justice, DSA and others for help. On September 29th, over 80 activists including a number of DSA members and DSA Executive Board members Ken Jenkins and Dave Ivers marched around the quiet neighborhood. The Wachovia Securities Bank in Grosse Pointe Woods refused to help Belva repay her loan, even after taxpayers gave them

\$25 billion, much of it to modify mortgages. The group declared that the bank was a crime scene and placed yellow crime scene tape around the property. As of this writing, Belva is still fighting to be allowed to stay in her home and make payments toward the day when the home will be hers.

Wells Fargo has spent millions of dollars to fight working class families by lobbying against the Employee Free Choice Act, the Foreclosure Prevention Act and House Bill 3609, which would allow judges to modify mortgages. Why can’t it help its customers and their neighborhoods?

Calendar of Events

November

Tuesday, November 3rd—“Rethink Afghanistan”—a new Robert Greenwald film focusing on big issues surrounding the war, including civilian casualties, cost, and impact on the Middle East—at 7 PM at St. John Episcopal Church, corner of Woodward and Eleven Mile Roads in Royal Oak—sponsored by Michigan Coalition for Human Rights

Saturday, November 7th—DSA general membership meeting from 10 AM until noon at the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center, 3500 Marais Avenue, Royal Oak

Saturday, November 7th—Rally for Health Care Reform at 1:30 PM at St. John Episcopal Church, corner of Woodward and Eleven Mile Roads in Royal Oak

Friday, November 13th-Sunday, November 15th—DSA National Convention at the Best Western University Plaza in Evanston, Illinois adjacent to Northwestern University

Saturday, November 14th—“Confronting the Taliban and Al-Qaeda: The Good War or American Quagmire?”—a program hosted by The Huntington Woods Peace, Citizenship, and Education Project featuring Professor Juan Cole from 1:30 to 3:30 PM at Royal Oak First United Methodist Church, 320 W. Seventh Street, Royal Oak

December

Sunday, December 6th— DSA executive board meeting from 10 AM until noon at the home of Helen Samberg, 30785 Hunters Drive, Apartment 23, Farmington Hills

Sunday, December 6th—Central United Methodist Church 5th Annual Peace and Justice Banquet at 6 PM at Fellowship Chapel, 7707 W. Outer Drive, Detroit

January 2010

Saturday, January 9th—DSA general membership meeting from 10 AM until noon at the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center, 3500 Marais Avenue, Royal Oak

Hold this date!!!!

Saturday, May 1st

The Frederick Douglass-Eugene V. Debs Dinner has been re-scheduled for May 1st (May Day!).

Spread the word to join the DSA Detroit Chapter!!!