



Democratic Socialists of America

Greater Detroit Newsletter

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AFGHANISTAN: A TRAGEDY ABOUT TO UNFOLD

by Al Fishman

For long-time peace activists, for those concerned with national funding for jobs, health care, environmental needs and education, the plan to maintain 100,000 troops in Afghanistan is a tragedy about to unfold. The U.S. and allied soldiers killed or physically or psychologically wounded, the Afghan and Pakistan civilians killed, the denial of resources for the every-day living needs of millions of Americans and others, and the spur to recruiting Al-Qaida and Taliban fanatics – these are the promises of this misbegotten plan.

It should have been clear eight years ago – after 9-11 – that our nation's unprincipled foreign policy had produced and nurtured an international criminal conspiracy. This conspiracy was misusing Islam, training martyrs for murder. An oil-hungry U.S. administration launched what was designed to be unending war against Arab and Muslim people. What was needed then – and what is still needed – even after much death and destruction – is an international law enforcement effort to apprehend and prosecute the criminals.

The 9-11 attacks were planned in Hamburg, Germany and fifteen of the nineteen terrorists were Saudis. It was never suggested that we attack Germany or Saudi Arabia, of course, but Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld went to war against Afghanistan and Iraq, concocting one false justification after another.

In Case You Missed Our Last Meeting...

Two speakers addressed the Detroit DSA general membership meeting on January 9th. The first was Glen Shelton of the Restaurant Opportunities Center of Michigan (ROC-Michigan). ROC-Michigan was launched in June 2008. It is a multiracial membership-based organization of restaurant workers. It is dedicated to improving working conditions and raising industry standards for all Southeastern Michigan restaurant workers.

ROC-Michigan has taken a three-pronged approach to building power for restaurant workers:

- 1) Conduct comprehensive research and policy work to lift standards in the industry,
- 2) Create consequences for low-road employers who violate workers' legal rights through a combination of organizing, litigation, and consumer pressure,
- 3) Promote high-road restaurant owners who pay and treat their workers well and offer free training and workforce development programs for restaurant workers.

In addition, ROC-Michigan is promoting the Responsible Restaurant Act, proposed state legislation which would give local governments the authority to consider an establishment's record of labor law violations when determining whether to grant, suspend, renew, or revoke the establishment's liquor license. Detroit DSA has joined the list of local organizations supporting the passage of the Responsible Restaurant Act.

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Our second speaker was gubernatorial candidate John Freeman. Though he has since left the race, John suggested several ideas worthy of further consideration including building mass transit in Michigan, local stock exchanges to provide needed capital to Michigan businesses that are unable to obtain loans from banks, and possible revenue enhancements to provide adequate funding for education in Michigan.

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The numbers of killed and physically or psychologically wounded keeps rising. Our military is stretched to the breaking point. Our nation's wealth has been pillaged or mortgaged for generations. The ranks of our people without jobs, homes and health care have swelled. Recruiting for Al-Qaida has grown and its international reach has spread.

Our own military estimates that there are no more than a hundred or so Al-Qaida operatives in Afghanistan, and their presence is greater in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Indonesia, for example. The recent incident on a Detroit-bound airliner demonstrates dramatically the need for more intelligent and coordinated intelligence. The planned escalation to 100,000 on the other hand will cost a hundred billion dollars a year, without improving our security. And it will exacerbate every other existing problem.

Why is our nation facing this disaster when the majority of voters opted for change in 2008? Intelligent people in this administration must be aware of the history of Afghanistan. And they must be aware of the disaster that befell Pres. Johnson's Great Society in the jungles of Vietnam. Is it because the six decade rule of the military-industrial complex in our national security state is too strong for any President to buck? Or is it because the first African-American President is fearful of the racist and "weak on defense" charges that would flow from the ever-dangerous right if he proposed a realistic policy?

Speculation, however, is pointless. Whining or despair is useless. Attacks on the President that deliver our nation into the hands of the irrational, racist right are unconscionable. What is needed is a new level of unity and effective action centered on the economic consequences of the President's plan.

Democratic Socialists of America

National Convention November 13-15, 2009

**The following priorities resolution was passed by the delegates to
the 2009 DSA National Convention in Evanston, Illinois on November 14, 2009**

Resolution on Priorities

DSA believes that an adequate response to the economic and environmental crisis requires the US to adopt a radical reform program akin to DSA's Economic Justice Agenda. We particularly emphasize the document's argument that only through strict democratic regulation of finance capital and raising the wages and working conditions for the global working class can the world economy serve people's

needs rather than people serving the needs of corporate elites.

Thus, in the coming period, DSA will prioritize educating, agitating and organizing. I. DSA will speak publicly about socialism. Simplistic and misleading "anti-socialist" rhetoric is being used by the right to mobilize populist anger against any reforms that would modestly redistribute wealth, income, and

opportunity in the United States. DSA will, through holding wellpublicized public forums, producing timely literature, organizing a visible presence at the 2010 US Social Forum, representing DSA positions to the Socialist International, and using newspapers, the web, radio, video and public access TV, educate the public as to why Obama's health care and fiscal stimulus plans are not socialist. For better or worse, these reforms are similar to or weaker than the policies of most other advanced capitalist democracies.

Furthermore, DSA will articulate why only forthrightly social democratic reforms, such as reinstating progressive and corporate taxation and engaging in prudent, but massive defense cuts, could fund desperately needed public health care and investment in education, infrastructure and alternative energy. DSA will endeavor to take advantage of the massive "socialist-baiting" of the right to educate the American public as to the major role socialist-inspired reforms have played in building more equitable societies than our own in Northern Europe and elsewhere.

II. DSA will engage in both education and action to rebuild a United States economy that serves the needs of working Americans and their families rather than the narrow interests of corporate elites. We will fight to defend people's basic needs against the continued legacy of the global economic meltdown and to restructure the US economy in a democratic direction. We will prepare for a range of struggles so as to be able to join nascent movements where and when we are most needed.

Key to this defense are:

1. Building an anti-foreclosure fight-back. The anti-foreclosure movement should use whatever forms of protest can protect citizens from being thrown out of their homes and literally onto the streets. DSA will join movements demanding a moratorium on foreclosures and the creation of a Federal Home Mortgage administration that would refinance "underwater mortgages" at affordable rates and force banks to absorb some of the losses on their speculative mortgages. Short of affordable re-financing, distressed home-owners should have the right to stay in their homes and pay the holders of their mortgages an affordable, present-market-value rent.

2. Joining progressive forces fighting for a new round of massive federal financial aid to state and municipal governments. Only by such measures can essential public services be maintained and massive deflationary layoffs be avoided.

3. Holding public hearings on an Economic Bill of Rights, to be developed in conjunction with our allies, and using the Economic Justice Agenda as a starting point.

4. Continuing to work with labor and its allies to pass meaningful labor law reform that would restore a real right to organize and strike and ensure that the NLRB enforces these laws. In particular, we will work to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, with an emphasis on encouraging our coalition partners in the non-labor left to understand the importance of rebuilding the labor movement as a vital part of progress on all our issues.

Furthermore:

- DSA reasserts its commitment to passing single-payer health care legislation at either the federal or state level. We will also support national health care reform that contains a meaningful public option and state single-payer opt-out clause. Short of single payer, only by establishing a public insurer that can compete against wasteful private insurers can health care costs be contained against the pressures of private interests to inflate the cost of health care. DSA locals will actively participate in coalitions fighting for the creation of state-level singlepayer health insurance systems.

- DSA will work with other progressive organizations to achieve real regulation of banks and the shadow banking system. We favor a financial regulatory system with teeth that restores the Glass-Steagall Act's separation of investment and commercial banks and that prioritizes investment in productive capital and commercial banks lending at affordable rates to consumers and small business.

- DSA will join young people in demanding that higher education, in the long run, be a universal, public good financed through general taxation. In the short run, we will fight for a reversal of cuts in state funding for public higher education. We will join forces with those fighting for a radical expansion in public funding of higher education and for a major increase in federal and state grants to university students.

- DSA will join the peace movement in demanding an end to war in Afghanistan as well as Iraq and in calling for massive cuts in wasteful and misguided defense

spending and for conversion to domestic needs and humanitarian foreign aid.

- DSA will begin a public dialogue among progressives about how to restructure the United States and global economy so that it creates productive jobs that provide living wages for all. The United States economy can only be restructured in an ecologically sustainable direction (and one that provides good jobs at good wages) if the federal government invests significant public funds in infrastructure development and alternative energy and mass transit technologies. Only if the federal government restores an effective right to organize can an effective union movement force employers to pay wages and benefits that justly reward workers who labor under safe and humane working conditions. By itself, private capital has shown no willingness to take on the massive investments needed to create such new technologies nor has it been willing to recognize the rights of working people to form democratic unions.

- Finally, DSA will work in 2010 to insure that progressive Democrats who support many of the above items are re-elected to Congress or replace conservative Democratic or Republican incumbents. Only if the Democratic majority in Congress is not only preserved, but also expanded and moved to the left, can any of the above progressive reforms be enacted. DSA PAC will explore hiring an organizer to help our members become more effective in electoral politics, especially in primary campaigns that promote true progressives. The above items do not represent a fully comprehensive program for

domestic and international justice. But they are a start. Neither DSA nor any other progressive organization can predict which of the above areas of struggle will take off in the near future. But given the breadth and depth of the current fiscal crisis of the states and the near-certain mass increase in foreclosures, some of the above items are likely to become arenas of mass political conflict. If and when they do, DSA, at the national and local level will be there shoulder-to-shoulder with our progressive allies. In addition to being active members of a progressive coalition, DSA will bring to these struggles a socialist perspective that contends that only through greater democratic control of economic life can meaningful democratic reforms be won, implemented, and defended.

III. For DSA to have the capacity to do this work, now and in the future, we must:

- a. Build the capacity of the Youth Section — YDS—by aiding YDS’s efforts and by aiding YDS in establishing organizing beach-heads on as many campuses as possible.
- b. Facilitate the transition of active YDSers into activist and leadership roles in the adult organization when they graduate or leave campus.
- c. Build the capacity of our locals, commissions, networks, and activists to take an active role in both visible public education and credible political action.
- d. Modernize the on-line capacity of the organization and its use of communication technologies in general.

YDS Update, Fall Semester 2009

By Ryan Wyeth, MSU YDS C0-Coordinator

This past fall has been a time of reinvention and struggle for MSU YDS. The semester began on a low note, as group membership and participation dropped off, primarily as a result of conflicting schedules and the overwhelming demands of school for many previously active members. Despite this setback, the semester has seen a number of successful YDS activities, as well as increasing numbers of new members. MSU YDS events during the past semester have focused primarily on education and recruitment, and the organization now feels ready to move into the new year, confident in its abilities to engage in activism in and around East Lansing. Below is a list of MSU YDS activities from the past semester:

Renegotiate NAFTA

Throughout the past semester, MSU YDS has been working to gather signatures for the DSA’s renegotiate NAFTA petition. We also recognize, however, that people are generally wary of lending their support to causes that they do not understand or of which they have limited knowledge. Therefore, education is a necessary part of any campaign if one wishes to optimize public feedback. It was with this in mind that MSU YDS hosted its first event of the year, a teach-in focused on the Renegotiate NAFTA campaign and featuring Detroit DSA’s chairperson, Dr. David Green; the event took place on September 22. While it saw a somewhat low rate of attendance, we consider it to have been a success because of an increased interest in YDS in the wake of the event.

Live from Pittsburg

For an entire weekend this past fall, the city of Pittsburg was the site of massive civil unrest and witness to some of the most obvious displays of forceful state power that can be found in the United States. Because of these events, Pittsburg briefly caught the attention and the minds of the nation, as news networks both large and small reported on the events taking place there. MSU YDS quickly realized that this was an educational opportunity that could not be missed; that by shifting the focus to look beyond the events in Pittsburg, to look to their cause, we could bring attention to the problems of international capitalism and globalization.

MSU YDS was lucky enough to have one of its prominent members, Allison Voglesong, in attendance at the G8 protests in Pittsburg. Upon her return, MSU YDS hosted its second event of the year, "Live from Pittsburg," at which Ms. Voglesong presented video footage she had shot of the protests, as well leading a discussion about the events in Pittsburg and their significance. Once again, the event, which took place on October 1, attracted new members to MSU YDS.

Defend your Education!

During the past fall, the situation of students has quickly progressed from bad to worse, leaving many students in positions of uncertainty or despair as to the future of their education and their future careers. Michigan State students in particular have encountered issues as a result of tuition hikes and cancelled scholarships, not to mention the difficulty of acquiring loans or finding a job. On November 10, we hosted YDS national coordinator Erik Rosenberg, who led a discussion on the educational crisis as a part of his national speaking tour.

DSA Conference

MSU YDS was proud to be able to send four of its members to the DSA national convention in Evanston, IL this past fall. The conference, which took place over a weekend, from November 13 – 15, was of immense value to the YDS delegates. Not only were they allowed a chance to participate in shaping the direction of DSA activities during the coming year, the conference also provided an opportunity to continue solidifying relationships with other YDS chapters across the country and valuable education in the form of the conference's various presenters. MSU YDS would like to thank Detroit DSA for subsidizing travel costs to and from the conference.

Dead Prez visits MSU

The final event of the semester, and certainly the biggest in terms of attendance took place on December 12, during the week immediately before finals week. MSU YDS, in coordination with a variety of other MSU organizations, including the W.E.B. DuBois Society, Langston Hughes Society, MSU African American Celebratory, and the African American and African Studies Program, helped bring internationally renowned rap group and social activists

Dead Prez to speak on campus. Dead Prez is a rap duo that is known not only for producing quality and award winning music, but perhaps even more for the political content of their lyrics and their activism, which center on a wide variety of issues, including institutional racism, police repression, veganism, capitalism, and many more. Their presentation saw an incredible level of attendance, filling the auditorium it was held in to the point that only standing room remained, even with extra chairs being brought in from outside. Dead Prez, in a characteristically innovative style, did not give a prepared presentation, but rather simply introduced themselves and then opened the floor to questions from the audience, leading to an engaging discussion that lasted beyond the event's scheduled time.

Mo Geary, Detroit DSA Executive Board Member, Dies

Detroit DSA lost a true comrade when Maurice ("Mo") Geary passed away on December 29th from non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He was 88 years old.

Mo was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1921. His family moved to Michigan in 1930. He received a doctorate in educational sociology from Wayne State University. He taught at Wayne County Community College for many years and was a proud member of the American Federation of Teachers-Michigan.

Prior to his career in education, Mo was a Catholic priest for twenty-three years. He held degrees from both University of Detroit and Catholic University. In 1966, as a direct result of his opposition to racism and advocacy for open housing in Detroit, Mo was forced out of his parish (St. David's Catholic Church in Detroit) and eventually from the priesthood altogether.

Mo was a champion of human rights. He marched for civil rights with Martin Luther King. He protested the Vietnam War. He was a lifelong socialist who served on Detroit DSA's executive board for the last six years. Mo was politically active until the end. He distributed DSA literature recently at a local theater during a showing of the new Michael Moore movie "Capitalism: A Love Story."

Mo's other political affiliations included: Gray Panthers of Metro Detroit, Oakland County Senior Advisory Council, Michigan Alliance to Strengthen Social Security and Medicare (Mo was an expert on the Social Security program and served as chair of this alliance for several years.), Alliance for Democracy, National Organization of Women, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Mo is survived by his wife, Frances, whom he married in 1995 and by three step-children—Beverly, John, and Phillip.

Perhaps the best phrase to sum up Mo's life was coined by another of our comrades, Stan Ovshinsky, many years ago, "Always with the oppressed, against the oppressor!"

(Information compiled by Randy Block with input from Frances Geary.)

DSA Values Bequests of All Sizes

Many people believe that only the rich can leave a meaningful legacy gift to a cause they strongly support. But, in truth, most people have the capacity to make a significant legacy gift to a cause they believe in. Even those of us with modest means have insurance policies, pension benefits, IRAs or living trusts for which we designate beneficiaries; and Democratic Socialists of America can be one such beneficiary. That is why it is important that all of us make arrangements to remember Democratic Socialists of America. A will or living trust should be part of everyone's life plan, and, once established, it should be reviewed on a regular basis. A sentence or two in your will or living trust can help promote DSA's work and our socialist values:

"I give to the Democratic Socialists of America, Inc., 75 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038 (insert cash amount) to be used for general purposes."

or

"I give to the Democratic Socialists of America, Inc., 75 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038 (enter the word "all" or state a percentage) of the rest of my estate to be used for general purposes."

Wills and living trusts are legal mechanisms that usually require an attorney to set up. However, many other legacy gifts do not require a lawyer to establish. Many bank accounts including checking, money market, savings accounts and certificates of deposit or IRA accounts have survivor provisions allowing you to designate a

survivor that assumes ownership of the account after your death. Such gifts do not normally go through probate. Life insurance policies also provide an easy vehicle for providing a legacy. You can designate DSA as a beneficiary for a specific amount or a percentage of an insurance policy. Many of us have one or more insurance policies. Credit card companies, fraternal organizations, alumni associations and employers often provide supplemental insurance; you can easily designate DSA as beneficiary of such policies. And, of course, most of us hold larger insurance policies that we purchase ourselves. And on every one we must designate a beneficiary or beneficiaries.

There is nothing that prevents you from designating DSA (always use our full legal name: **Democratic Socialists of America, Inc.**) as your beneficiary or one of your beneficiaries on a life insurance policy or as the survivor on a bank or IRA account. This notice is not intended as legal advice, which should only come from an attorney. DSA's national office can assist anyone seeking general advice, but for estate planning it is best to consult a professional. If you do designate DSA as a beneficiary of a will, living trust, insurance policy or any other investment vehicle, we would greatly appreciate it if you inform the DSA national office with whatever degree of specificity you are comfortable with. By making a generous bequest to DSA, you can greatly aid the future of the socialist movement and the organization fighting for the values and programs to which all of us have dedicated much of our lives.

Calendar of Events

February

Sunday, February 7th—DSA executive board meeting from 10 AM until noon at the home of Helen Samberg, 30785 Hunters Drive, Apartment 23, Farmington Hills

March

Saturday, March 6th—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!).