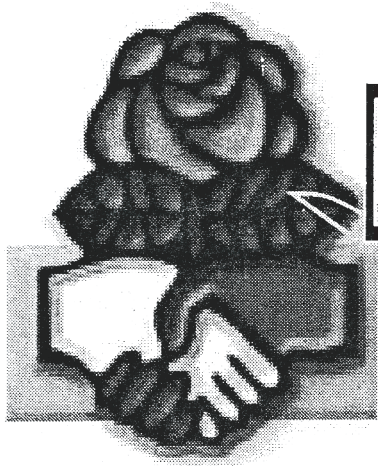




Democratic Socialists of America

Greater Detroit Newsletter

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Conyers Fundraiser a Success

Over 100 people attended the DSA Political Action Committee fundraiser for Representative John Conyers, Jr. at Colors Restaurant in Detroit on May 27th. Eighty-four donors contributed a total of \$8120 to the Congressman's primary campaign. Our guest of honor was Jim Hightower, progressive radio commentator, syndicated columnist, and editor of the Hightower Lowdown. He entertained the audience with his humorous observations on Republicans, the Tea Party, and Mitt Romney. Our co-hosts for the event were Reverend David Bullock, President of the Detroit branch of Operation PUSH, David Hecker, President of the American Federation of Teachers-Michigan, Tim Carpenter, the Executive Director of Progressive Democrats of America, and Marjorie Mitchell, the Executive Director of the Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network—each of whom stressed the importance of re-electing Congressman Conyers from a different perspective.

John Conyers is an icon to the progressive community—not only in Michigan, but nationally. He is the only elected

official ever to be endorsed by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. As the ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, he opposed the Patriot Act and has been a staunch defender of civil liberties. He is the sponsor of the Medicare for All Act (HR 676), a single-payer health insurance bill which would provide comprehensive health care benefits to all Americans while simultaneously containing health care costs. He is the sponsor of the Humphrey-Hawkins 21st Century Full Employment and Training Act (HR 870), a bill which would use a tax on financial transactions to create a national jobs program aimed at producing three to four million new jobs per year in infrastructure improvement, social services, and green energy.

As a result of re-districting drawn by Republicans after the 2010 Census, Representative Conyers is running in a new district. He faces a serious primary challenge from two opponents, State Senator Burt Johnson and State Senator Glen Anderson. The primary is on August 7th.



*Rev. David Bullock,
Representative John Conyers, Jr.,
Marjorie Mitchell*



*AFT Michigan President
David Hecker*



*Representative John Conyers, Jr.
Jim Hightower*

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DETROIT DSA FIGHTING EVICTIONS

Detroit DSA, along with the People Before Banks Coalition and Occupy Detroit, has been fighting to prevent the eviction of Jennifer Britt from her home. Since her husband died in 2006, Jennifer has paid more than \$40,000 to Flagstar Bank to save her family's home in Rosedale Park. She lost her job in 2008 but continued to pay rising monthly mortgage payments which consumed her entire savings. Flagstar foreclosed in 2010 and sold the mortgage to Fannie Mae. Eviction is imminent.

Jennifer has found a new job and could make reasonable mortgage payments if Flagstar and Fannie Mae agreed to work with her. State and federal programs call for mortgage modifications to keep people in their homes. There is no good reason why Jennifer and her family should be evicted, leaving another vacant house in Detroit to further depress surrounding property values.

Flagstar claims to be a community bank and a Michigan company. It is actually owned by Maitlin Patterson Global Advisors, a New York equity firm which Forbes magazine recently described as a leading "vulture investor," known for "picking the bones of crumbling companies." The bank was assessed \$133 million in fines by the federal government this year for fraudulent loan practices stretching back over a decade. Flagstar has yet to repay taxpayers for the \$267 million bailout it received in 2009.

Detroit DSA members attended a rally in support of Jennifer Britt outside of her home in Rosedale Park on June 9th. We also attended a demonstration at Flagstar's Dearborn Heights branch on June 16th as well as a demonstration at the Flagstar-sponsored Riverfest in Detroit on June 22nd.

DETROIT DSA EXECUTIVE BOARD ENDORSES THREE CANDIDATES FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

At our last Detroit DSA Executive Board meeting, we endorsed three candidates for state representative: Jon Switalski (Warren), Sarah Roberts (St. Clair Shores/Eastpointe), and Rose Mary Robinson (Detroit/Hamtramck). All three are solid progressives with strong labor, environmental, and civil rights credentials. All three are running in majority Democratic districts which means that if they win their primaries, they will win the general election in the fall. Similarly, Representative John Conyers, Jr., whom we endorsed at a previous general membership meeting and for whom we have already held a fundraising reception, is running for re-election in the 13th district Democratic primary. Primaries such as these (with low voter turnout and multiple candidates) are where a small organization such as ours can have the greatest impact. We must turn out volunteers to canvass for these candidates. With this in mind, I present the following list of canvassing dates. I am asking each of our members who is physically able to volunteer for at least one date. Please send an e-mail message to dsagreen@aol.com to let us know on which date(s) you can participate so that we can inform the respective campaigns of how many volunteers to expect.

CANVASSING SCHEDULE

Saturday, July 7th--Canvassing for Representative John Conyers, Jr. in Melvindale from 10 AM until 1 PM. We will meet at the home of Dan Gebbs, 15848 Beatrice in Allen Park at 9:45 AM.

Sunday, July 15th--Canvassing for Rose Mary Robinson in Hamtramck from 10 AM until 1 PM. We will meet at a private residence in Hamtramck located at 11727 Moran at 9:45 AM.

Saturday, July 21st--Canvassing for Sarah Roberts in St. Clair Shores from 10 AM until 1 PM. We will meet at Sarah's house located at 22440 Lakeland Street in St. Clair Shores at 9:45 AM.

Saturday, August 4th--Canvassing for Jon Switalski in Warren from 10 AM until 1 PM. We will meet at Tracy's Corner Cafe located at 29200 Hoover in Warren at 9:45 AM.

CUBA TODAY

Is Social Democracy in its Future?

By David Elsila

Many years ago at a conference in Washington, D.C. I heard Swedish Social-Democratic Prime Minister Olaf Palme answer a question from an audience member: "How do you define socialism in Sweden?"

"Well," Palme answered, "we let the private sector create the wealth, but then we tax the hell out of it and redistribute it."

Palme, who was assassinated a few years later, was joking a bit, of course, but on my trips to Cuba, I've continued to ponder his answer. Will Cuba, with its attempts to provide all of its citizens with the basic things they need for life-- education, health care, and other social services-- grow into the kind of advanced social-democratic welfare state that Sweden and many other European countries enjoy?

Earlier this year, I had a chance to spend eight days in Cuba where I was able to test this question with a number of observations. Travel to Cuba has become easier since President Obama lifted many restrictions for visitors last year; on the day our plane left Miami, there were at least five flights to Cuba listed on the departure board. Groups ranging from National Geographic to Global Exchange to the Center for Cuban Studies all sponsor regular trips to the island. Unlike many other Caribbean excursions, these trips to Cuba don't feature beach vacations, but are designed to offer a glimpse of what day-to-day life is like on the island. While these are guided tours, there is plenty of time in the evenings to venture out and be on one's own.

One of the first impressions you have on arriving in Cuba is that the infrastructure seems to work. You arrive at a new airport terminal with a parking lot full of tour buses and taxis, and you are driven down broad

avenues to the city of Havana. Many of the vehicles you pass, though, are pre-1959 UAW-built cars from Detroit (for fifty years, the U.S. trade embargo has kept new cars and most other U.S. products off the island). In many areas, Havana has a timeworn appearance -- architectural gems in need of paint and repairs, potholed streets, broken sidewalks. In other areas, whole plazas have been renovated and boast sidewalk cafes, restaurants, hotels, shops, and street musicians. As one member of a group of Detroit religious and educational visitors concluded a few years ago: "Cuba is not a third-world country, but it's probably the poorest first-world country I've seen."

Walking the streets of Havana, Pinar del Rio, and other parts of Cuba give one the sense that Olaf Palme's description of how socialism could function may be developing here. Foreign concerns have invested in nickel-mining and oil-exploration and the marketing of rum and tobacco. There are massive new hotel complexes as parts of joint ventures with private investors from Spain, France, and elsewhere. Privately-run bed-and-breakfasts reach out to tourists, and a growing number of private restaurants called *paladares* operate in many neighborhoods. We visited one such restaurant, replete with neon signs outside and with excellent cuisine inside. Once restricted to 12 patrons, they may now seat up to 50; once limited to hiring only members of the owner's household, they may now employ anyone seeking a job. Much of the tobacco industry is dependent on private farms; we visited one farmer whose holdings had been in his family for three generations. He told us that he sold 90 percent of his crop to the state, adding, with his tongue only partially in his cheek, "I keep the other 20 percent for myself."

As part of the other half of Palme's equation, the fruits of this private-sector activity (for example, the state's share of profits from joint ventures, taxes on restaurants and other private businesses, licensing fees for entrepreneurs, and income from the 2 million tourists who visit annually) end up funding programs like education and health care. An estimated 43 cents of every tourist dollar helps pay for social programs.

Health care is universal and free. Cubans boast of their low infant-mortality rate and their life expectancy, which is longer than in parts of Detroit. And they have a logical, structured health-care delivery system. On an earlier trip, I visited a clinic in the Havana neighborhood of Vedado, staffed by Rene, a physician, and a nurse. Rene lived on the second floor of the clinic and kept office hours every morning while spending afternoons doing home visits in his neighborhood of 600 people. In a file box on his desk, he kept cards for each family. "I know who has diabetes, who is pregnant, and who has other health issues," he said. If he was unable to give the care that a patient needed, he referred him or her to a polyclinic a few blocks away, which, in turn, could refer cases to one of the city's hospitals as needed. This three-tier system, he told us, was typical for the island, with a clinic serving each 600 residents. (On our most recent trip, we visited with a homeopathic physician in the artists' colony of Las Terrazas who had a variety of herbal tonics that he claimed could help patients with various maladies, and which he sold to some of our group members. And in the Habana Vieja neighborhood stands a pharmacy that provides "green" medicine for patients seeking that type of health care.)

Our group visited other social programs – the Ninos and Ninas community center for at-risk children and families in a poor section of Havana, and a project in the city of Pinar del Rio where art therapists were working with children and young adults who have Down's Syndrome. In an earlier visit to the suburb of Marianao, we met parents who proudly showed off a library that they had built as an annex to a new school, where children were learning English and practicing rap music.

While Cuba prioritizes these kinds of social expenditures, there's far less emphasis on the kind of consumerism that Americans are familiar with: no advertising, few billboards other than political ones, limited choices in the shops. Unique among Latin American countries, Cuba rations basic foodstuffs, but in such a way that no matter one's social standing or income level everyone is entitled to the same. There

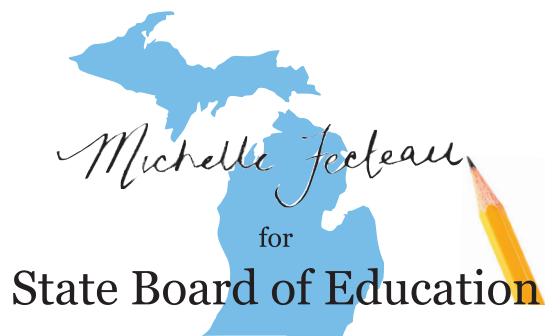
doesn't seem to be a "1 percent and 99 percent" division; everyone is part of the 100 percent: a friend, Jose, who is a Communist Party member and who worked for Che Guevara in the early days of the Revolution, told us that he dropped and broke a glass bottle containing his month's ration of cooking oil. Despite his Party membership, he said, he had to wait another month for a ration. Our guide, Sara Daisy, showed us her ration book: 10 eggs a month per person, six pounds of rice, 15 pounds of potatoes or plantains, three pounds of white sugar, and a liter of milk a day for children under 7. These and other rationed basics are sold at greatly subsidized prices; if someone wants more, they can buy them at higher prices at a farmer's market or in a hard-currency store.

An exception to the overall sense of equality is found in those Cubans whose jobs in tourism provide them with hard-currency tips or who have relatives abroad who can send them hard-currency remittances. This two-tier system has bred complaints, and there are reports that the Cuban government is going to try to resolve the social fissures that result.

Inside and outside of the economic sphere, life in Cuba bears both similarities and differences to the U.S. Our guide, Sara, had been a teacher of English, but left her job because she wanted to join a "microbrigade" to build a home for her family (the state provides construction materials to neighborhood groups that work with construction workers to build new homes). Her principal, she said, wouldn't give her a leave from her job to build the house ("education before a new house" he said, according to Sara). "So I gave notice, quit my job, built my house and lived on my husband's salary, and now I'm a guide." She and others were frank about Cuba's needs: "Housing is our biggest problem," she said, "We have too many professionals," she explained. "and not enough skilled trades people – painters, construction workers, carpenters."

We heard other frank descriptions of problems in Cuba. Some people were openly critical of policies and leaders and weren't reluctant to express their views. Several artworks on display in galleries were subtly critical of social conditions. Other Cubans voiced support for their system at a new housing project in Pinar del Rio, where several dozen residents hosted us for an evening of informal discussions and children's performances.

Unlike the U.S., few Cubans have regular access to the Internet, although e-mail is available at Post Offices, and I am regularly able to send and receive e-mail with friends in Havana. There is very little variety in the media, although the Catholic Church has what we were told is



Invest in our children. Invest in quality public education.



I am running for the Michigan State Board of Education and seeking the endorsement of your organization.

I am a lifelong Democrat, a community and labor activist, the mother of seven and the wife of a public school special education teacher. I have worked as an educator at Wayne State University's Labor Studies Center, and as a union representative with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union and the Service Employees International Union in Michigan. I am currently the Executive Director of the Wayne State University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors–American Federation of Teachers.

I received my formal education from Michigan State University with undergraduate degrees in Employment Relations and Political Science, as well as a master's degree in Labor and Industrial Relations.

Why do I want to become a member of the Michigan State Board of Education?

First, I firmly believe that the educational system is at the heart of any program to improve the lives of Michigan citizens. The State Board of Education has the constitutional responsibility to provide leadership in forming education policy from preschool to higher education. I will work to increase the effectiveness of the Board as a voice for reform and progressive educational policies.

Second, my particular experience as a parent provides a unique perspective on our school system, its successes and its failures. My husband, Eddie Hejka, and I have two children by birth, one of whom has autism. We have also been foster parents for nine children, five of whom we have adopted including three more with special needs. They all have faced a variety of challenges in their educational experiences which further demonstrated to me the need for a strong, vital and responsive public school system.

Third, I stand for fair and adequate funding for public education, from early childhood through higher education. I favor the limitation in the number of charter schools and holding both them and the public schools to strict standards of accountability. I favor a reliable and well-developed system of special education services, both public and in charter schools. I support collective bargaining rights at all levels of the Michigan education system.

I look forward with eagerness to serving the citizens of Michigan as a member of the State Board of Education.

Best Regards,

Michelle Fecteau
Michelle Fecteau

a lively and critical journal. U.S. movies are regularly shown on Cuban TV, but we saw no U.S. publications in the shops. We visited one of three synagogues in Havana on a Friday night as it was readying for services with about 150 people; an adjacent social hall was decorated for a bat mitzvah with a banner reading, “Felicidades Claudia.” Shortly after we left, several thousand Cubans greeted Pope Benedict in Havana’s largest square. And a group of Mormons in our tour group attended a service in Havana on the Sunday that we were there.

Several years ago, Francisco, a Cuban man in his forties whom I had gotten to know said he was disillusioned with much in the country. He couldn’t buy the same things that I could, because he didn’t have the hard currency that I had. And he felt that if he voiced criticisms, he would be ostracized by neighbors in the local block club. He felt that Fidel had surrounded himself with “yes-men” who told him what he wanted to hear.

Francisco had been educated by the state, had gone to the Soviet Union to study electronics and communication, and had a job with the Cuban TV network

to do technical support (he had traveled to Europe to help cover the Olympics).

“But despite the problems I see,” he told me, “I consider myself a Marxist and I have seen the good things that socialism has done for my country in terms of medicine, education, and more. The last thing we need is for the U.S. to come here and turn us into another Puerto Rico. We Cubans need to solve our own problems.” With a 50-year history of free health care, education and a basic safety net, it’s likely that as Cubans such as my friend search for changes in their society they will gravitate more toward a social-democratic welfare state than to unbridled U.S.-style capitalism with its class divisions and economic insecurities.

Those of us who share a vision of social democracy for Cuba can and should insist that the U.S. lift its blockade of the island so that our island neighbor can more vigorously pursue its dream of advancing social and economic equality, while removing the fears of economic and cultural imperialism that limit some of the expressions of life that many of us take for granted.

Jerry Deneau was a Detroit printer who rose through the ranks of his union to become President of the lithographers local in Detroit and later Secretary-Treasurer of the International Graphic Communications Union. He died in a motorcycle accident in June.

JERRY DENEAU

By Ronald Aronson

Jerry left us so suddenly—and so shockingly—that it will probably take some time for us to take leave of him. I’m still grappling with the horrible crash—its when, where, and why—and I’m sure that there are probably things about it that we’ll never know.

But most of all, I’ve been thinking all week about some of the striking paradoxes of this wonderful man. He functioned successfully for thirty-five years in the rough and tumble world of labor union politics, but remained gentle. In an environment of gamesmanship and cynicism, Jerry was direct and honest. An important national labor leader, Jerry was always humble. A skilled craftsman who became a member of the American middle class, he was also a fiery radical, a socialist, and an idealist to his very last day. A man of powerful conviction, Jerry was always open to new ideas and experiences and willing to learn from others. Serious and thoughtful, he also had a strong sense of humor. I can imagine Jerry the lifelong atheist laughing at the prayer service held at the track after the crash last Sunday.

I met Jerry more than forty years ago, through the Wayne State University Labor School. I was a new

professor at Wayne State, one of the first of the 1960s generation radical faculty and Jerry was one of those younger workers who responded positively to the anti-war and campus movements. He had participated in the giant demonstration at the Warren Tank Plant, had come to the Labor School, and with UAW activist Pete Kelley, Lew Burt, and others, sought out two young professors at Wayne, Ernie Benjamin and myself, who could teach them about Marx. That informal class was my first contact with Jerry.

At around the same time, he was elected to local union office. I remember visiting him on Hamilton to ask for his help when I was turned down for tenure at Wayne State. Jerry intervened immediately, taking me to Tom Turner, president of the Wayne County AFL-CIO, and putting me in touch with people in Solidarity House. He was an important part of my campaign, which taught me the virtues of being protected by a union. It took 2½ years, but under collective bargaining, I eventually won my grievance—in being terminated for political reasons, my constitutional rights had been violated, the arbitrator found—and I was awarded tenure at Wayne State. Jerry

and Georgi were at that huge celebration 37 years ago.

Jerry enrolled in the first class I taught after winning tenure. He was a good student. Why then didn't he go on to complete his degree at Wayne? I encouraged him, but he claimed he was too busy, which of course was true. But over the years I've met other labor activists who found the wherewithal to complete college. And Jerry was, as most of you know, an avid reader and an astute analyst of political situations. He would think quite naturally in terms of who has the power, and especially in terms of social class. He didn't learn these ideas from Marx, but in one way or another from his parents. Underpinning those ways of thinking was Jerry's sense of fairness. I've rarely seen someone who so strongly wanted to understand the world around him, and a root sense of right and wrong led him to conclude that the entire system needed to be changed. When we think of the 1960s, we think exclusively of the Civil Rights and the student and anti-war movements, but the time also saw a revival of labor activism. Jerry found his way there instinctively and then eagerly sought out the intellectual reasons why. But this didn't require that he have a college degree. The last text message he sent me, after reading an article in *The Nation* about French intellectual and political life, was to thank me for introducing him to the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse, both of whom I've written about. So Jerry was definitely intellectually inclined. To the very end, he was recommending books and articles to me, and asking me to recommend books and articles to him.

I think there was another thing that goes along with the degree that Jerry didn't want. In our culture a degree is touted as the ticket of entry into the great American middle class. While he was a skilled craftsman who was earning a middle-class income, Jerry was a worker. He was like the lifelong sergeants in the army who refuse promotion to officer, not wanting to become part of a higher class with special privileges. That was part of his identity, a member of the working class. He was proud of it, had no need to "better" himself; he was convinced that the workers could do without the capitalists, that they could run the society and should own the means of production, and out of this conviction he became a working-class leader.

This did not mean that Jerry segregated himself from people of other backgrounds. Not at all. From 1975 to 1985 Jerry and I were members of a post-1960s group of activists, New American Movement. Most of the group were college graduates who came from middle-class backgrounds—and Jerry was keenly aware of this—but Jerry became a valued member of the group, especially

meeting often with other union activists and officers. But, as I witnessed two or three times, he reserved his animus for management, especially when they refused to treat their workers fairly. I happened to be part of one meeting between Jerry and the owner of a printing business—a progressive man, part of our movement—who had taken work out of his shop to a non-union shop and then laid off some of his workers, and I was struck by two things: how fierce this gentle man could become, and how personal connections and reputations meant nothing to Jerry if you were unfair to your workers.

After many years in local union office, in 1988 Jerry was elected as an officer in the international, renamed the Graphics Communications International Union. He and Georgi moved to the Washington, D.C. area. Marty Ganzglass will be telling you about Jerry in the international. For me the interesting question, and I asked Jerry about it more than once, was why in thirty-five years as a local and international officer, he never tried to become president. There were always good union reasons—loyalty to the current presidents, not wanting to create a rift among the members—as well as good personal reasons—it was always too early, too demanding, or too late. But I think something else was also at play. Actually, it was something simple: Jerry had no personal ambition. It's hard to see him schmoozing with the bigwigs, playing golf with management. He represented his workers. He never wanted to be more than one of them. He was a straight shooter who had not even a touch of the glad hand or self-seeking to him. His humility, sincerity, and honesty made him a natural labor leader, but I think these traits also kept him from becoming the person who tries to keep everyone happy. I think he knew that being secretary-treasurer, not president, fit his personality, his natural militancy, his commitments, and his character.

Although his body was not as kind to him as it had once been, although his hearing deteriorated, Jerry never grew old. His personality and his interests remained young to the end.

Recently we had several conversations about current political events, which he always approached with the same fire, the same radicalism. Accordingly, he was one of those 70-year olds who supported Occupy Wall Street when it appeared, was eager to learn about Occupy Detroit and Occupy DC. And he rang instinctively with them when they talked about the 1% and the 99%. That was what his whole life had been about.

Agenda for the DSA General Membership Meeting on July 14, 2012

Join us for Detroit DSA's general membership meeting on July 14th. We have two speakers this month. The first speaker is **Chris Michalak**, the new President of the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO, who will discuss the **Protect Our Jobs** campaign to place a Constitutional amendment protecting collective bargaining rights in Michigan on the November ballot. DSA members gathered petition signatures for this campaign over the last two months. Chris will update us on the progress of this campaign.

Our second speaker is **Michelle Fecteau**, a DSA member and executive director of the American Federation of Teachers/American Association of University Professors local at Wayne State University who is running for a seat on the State Board of Education.

1. Treasury Report
2. Report on Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network (MichUHCAN)
3. Report on Southeast Michigan Jobs with Justice (JWJ)
4. Report on the Detroit Area Peace with Justice Network (DAPJN)
5. Report on the Michigan Alliance to Strengthen Social Security and Medicare (MASSM)
6. Speaker: **Chris Michalak** on the **Protect Our Jobs** Campaign
7. Speaker: **Michelle Fecteau** on **"Public Education in Michigan"**
8. Proposed DSA Electoral Activity for 2012.

Calendar of Events

JULY

Saturday, July 14: DSA general membership meeting from 10 AM until noon at the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center (3500 Marais Avenue—near the intersection of Thirteen Mile and Crooks Roads)

Sunday, July 15: Canvassing for state representative candidate Rose Mary Robinson in Hamtramck from 10 AM until 1 PM. We will meet at 9:45 AM at a private residence located at 11727 Moran in Hamtramck to receive our assignments.

Saturday, July 21: Canvassing for state representative candidate Sarah Roberts in St. Clair Shores from 10 AM until 1 PM. We will meet at 9:45 AM at Sarah's home located at 22440 Lakeland Street in St. Clair Shores to receive our assignments.

AUGUST

Saturday, August 4: Canvassing for State Representative Jon Switalski in Warren from 10 AM until 1 PM. We will meet at 9:45 AM at Tracy's Corner Café located at 29200 Hoover in Warren to receive our assignments.

Sunday, August 5: DSA executive board meeting from 10 AM until noon at the home of David and Teena Green, 28292 Harwich Drive in Farmington Hills

SEPTEMBER

Saturday, September 8: DSA general membership meeting from 10 AM until noon at the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center (3500 Marais Avenue—near the intersection of Thirteen Mile and Crooks Roads)

NOVEMBER

Saturday, November 10th: Frederick Douglass-Eugene V. Debs Dinner at 6 PM at UAW Local 600 (10550 Dix in Dearborn)