

EQUALITY

MADSA Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America

ANTHONY HILL, BLACK LIVES MATTER, AND DSA

By Adam Cardo

I first became involved with DSA in the fall of 2014, as part of my larger political realignment brought on by the Black Lives Matter movement. After spending the summer volunteering for a moderate Democrat in Georgia, I began a semester at American University in Washington D.C., taking classes while interning for another moderate Democrat. Fully enmeshed in mainstream “progressive” politics, I was all set to become a neo-liberal Democratic Party apparatchik. However, two events

transpired to lead me to the socialist light. The first was my involvement with the Metro Washington D.C. DSA chapter, which I discovered through a mutual acquaintance. The other crucial event was the non-indictment of the police officers who murdered Eric Garner. The murder and rise of the Black Lives Matter movement brought into focus the entrenched racism

that formed the bedrock of the U.S. society and economic system, the critical link between capitalist exploitation and white supremacy and the need for a total replacement of capitalism with socialism to create a better world.

After returning to Georgia, I quickly joined the Metro Atlanta DSA chapter, which was already involved with local Black Lives Matter groups. Besides solidarity with the events in Ferguson and Baltimore, Atlanta BLM activism mostly centered around the murder of Anthony Hill. Anthony Hill was a 27-year-old African-American Air Force veteran whose bipolar disorder was exasperated by his deployment overseas. During a psychotic episode, a naked Hill was shot and killed

outside his apartment by DeKalb County Police officer Robert Olson in March of 2015. Local activist groups who led the protest included Rise Up Georgia and #It’sBiggerThanYou, as well as myself and several fellow Atlanta DSA members. We also collected funds for the cause at our Socialist Dialogue. After an initial protest outside Hill’s neighborhood, activists focused their efforts on securing an indictment of the accused officer with marches and rallies. The struggle culminated in a 3-day

camp-out outside the DeKalb County courthouse during the week of January 17th. The officer was successfully indicted on all six counts against him.

The events surrounding Anthony Hill show the power of Black Lives Matter in countering the racial policing that predominates in the U.S., while connecting it to the larger white supremacy that pervades our culture.

However, we must be aware of the time and resources required for such a struggle. That a camp-out was needed to secure even the limited victory of potentially finding a police officer guilty shows how much time and energy these fights require. This is especially true in Georgia, where legal protections for officers are considered the most extensive in the nation. In the case of a grand jury, Georgia law gives accused officers access to the grand jury’s meeting, as well as the opportunity to address the panel without the threat of cross-examination or a rebuttal by prosecutors.

Bringing all these lessons together, it is critical for DSA to aid the Black Lives Matter movement in their struggle. Since

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Photo: Daniel Hanley



Photo: Loraine Fontana

People gather in protest, Decatur courthouse.

outside mass struggle is the critical factor in securing legal victories (albeit minor ones), it is important for DSA locals to aid local Black Lives Matter-affiliated groups with grassroots organizing and mobilization. Even things as simple as phone banking for small, local events can have huge impacts on the momentum surrounding campaigns. DSA has a huge opportunity to connect with newly radicalized people of color, and it is an opportunity we can not pass up.

If you want to work more around the Black Lives Matter movement and other anti-racism work, you can become a part of the DSA Anti-Racism Working Group by emailing me at acardo1120@gmail.com. ♦

Blinder, Alan. "Georgia Police Officer Indicted for Murder of Unarmed Black Man." *The New York Times*. 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/22/us/georgia-police-officer-robert-olsen-anthony-hill-shooting.html>.

Adam Cardo is the President of Emory University Young Democratic Socialists and a member of Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America.

BERNSTORMING AND BEYOND: What's different about Bernie's campaign?

By Daniel Hanley

Metro Atlanta DSA's Daniel Hanley has helped coordinate MADSA's efforts to support Bernie Sanders' candidacy through the independent group Georgia for Bernie, and national DSA supports the related People for Bernie movement (see dsausa.org). As individuals, Daniel and other members also volunteer for the Bernie campaign. – Editor

As field offices open throughout the state, the Sanders campaign in Georgia rapidly announced multiple Bernstorm events (previously "barnstorms") to launch the coordinated campaign effort, augmented by a foundation of community support built over the previous year by an authentic grassroots, independent coalition. On January 29, nearly 200 people packed the Communications Workers of America union hall to meet with national and local staff.

Some highlights: an unscripted speak-out revealed how many first-time political activists there were in the crowd, moved to action by the prospect of transformational socioeconomic progress. Nearly 20% of the people present volunteered to host phone banks in the next month, and virtually 100% signed up to attend one. A friend noted that when Obama himself visited for the volunteer kick-off in 2008, he didn't draw as many people as we had at the CWA hall. Whoa.

And, following the Bernstorming, the moment I'd been waiting for: my apartment became a hotbed of democratic socialist organizing activity through phone banking. For many present, this was an entirely new form of political engagement. Some new volunteers persuaded multiple voters to cast a vote for the people (not the billionaires) and informed voters about their caucus location. Most phone bankers, myself included, dealt with more rejection – but

we all understood we were improving the quality of the voter database and assisting our Iowan sisters and brothers canvassing out in the cold.

We were also deliberate about making a little time and space to introduce ourselves and discuss our personal and collective struggle(s) with the prevailing system, along with some opportunities to resist it. I was glad to hear some people express interest in Moral Monday GA's work to fight the regressive, hateful legislation at the state Capitol; Occupy Our Homes



Hanley (far right) and fellow Sanders supporters

Atlanta's work to fight gentrification and forced displacement in Peoplestown; the Fight for \$15; and street agitation at the Republican debates in Greenville. In fact 4-5 people were moved to sign up to hop on the bus to South Carolina!

Despite the growing grassroots momentum, we're hearing a great deal of skepticism and disingenuous concern-trolling from the punditry and others about whether a progressive presidential campaign can help launch a political revolution. They ask, "How can Bernie get the legislature to pass all these programs, when Obama and his volunteer army couldn't?" I want to revisit some of my personal experiences in this area.

The inspiring effort to elect Obama in 2008 – partly Astroturf, but also genuinely grassroots in ways – introduced an incredible number of people to community organizing and political activism for the first time, and I was one of those people. When Obama was elected, I urged my fellow volunteers to stay engaged and involved. There was no way we'd advance Obama's stated platform, I argued, without continued organizing, advocacy and direct action, given the narrow congressional margins, regressive Democrats, and continued corporate domination of society.

Very few people listened as we awaited our "orders" from Organization For America (OFA) leadership. That was a mistake. The organization stagnated and fell apart after several months. Now, nearly all of my OFA friends and contacts are scattered, atomized, disengaged. A few of the paid organizers I'd met went on to contribute to the labor

movement and other worthwhile struggles, whereas others joined the Democratic establishment. We see what happened over the past seven years of the Obama presidency.

If you listen to Bernie Sanders's reflections on all this, they line up with my first-hand observations, for the most part. That's heartening. It's a message that needs to be heard: if we want progress, we'll need sustained commitment to building a movement. We'll need substantial growth in grassroots, lowercase-D democratic labor, community, and socialist organizations such as DSA. We'll need comprehensive strategies, which include direct action, in order to disrupt and transform the prevailing order, which is deeply violent and antidemocratic.

Will this happen? There's no guarantee: it depends partly on us. However, I will say that I have noticed many of the newly-activated Bernie supporters participating in meetings and actions around the Fight for \$15, Black Lives Matter, StopTPP, the Atlanta Climate March, and so on. Some have joined Metro Atlanta DSA. That doesn't happen automatically, though. It will only happen if Bernie's campaign is highly unconventional, and if we deliberately do the work – very early on – to build these types of coalitions. ♦

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HAPPY 2016

MADSA ended 2015 in a whirlwind of activities. The national DSA convention was soon followed by our ninth annual Douglass-Debs award dinner; the yearly protest against the School of the Americas/School of the Assassins/WHINSEC at Ft. Benning; and demonstrations for addressing climate change and supporting refugees and immigrants, plus the amazing grassroots support for Bernie Sanders. Our new year opens with several exciting public events. –Barbara Joye

ATLANTANS HELP SET NATIONAL DSA AGENDA

Thanks to MADSA's growth over the past year, we were granted seven votes at the national convention (up from five in 2013). Nine members attended, participating in and helping to lead workshops and to determine the future of the organization. Brandon Payton-Carrillo and Hope Adair were elected to DSA's National Political Committee; Barbara Joye retired from the NPC after eight years.

The convention passed a new, in-depth strategy document to replace those last updated in the late 1990s, established



Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins



Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

Left, MADSA officer Travis Reid listens to deputy director David Duhalde at the convention; above, writing workshop shows Barbara Joye, center; Milt Tambor and Daniel Hanley, far right.

an Environmental Justice Network and a working group on international issues, and passed a priorities resolution to guide DSA's use of its resources during the two years until the next convention. The final version of the strategy document (still being edited) and an executive summary will be posted soon on dsausa.org. For more about the convention, including a summary of the new priorities, see http://www.dsa-atlanta.org/madsa_at_national_dsa_convention. ♦

SOLIDARITY: CHARLESTON, JAN. 17

Fight for \$15 folks from Atlanta took a bus to Charleston to join with organizations across the South for a mass mobilization and demonstration at the Democratic presidential debate. MADSA members Adam Cardo, Daniel Hanley, and Megan Harrison were among them. The group called on all candidates to focus on living wages, racial justice, and healthcare for our families. After protesting and marching outside the debate, a silent march was held outside the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the site of the murder of the Charleston 9 by Dylan Roof. A nice surprise occurred when Senator Bernie

Sanders came out and addressed the marchers. (The Bernie signal mysteriously appeared on the building where the debate was taking place.) ♦

Photo: Adam Cardo



Photo: Daniel Hanley



Left: Adam Cardo; above, night sign on building

SOCIALIST DIALOGUE: THE STRUGGLE FOR A JUST AMERICA Where Race, Class and Gender Meet

A record 59 people showed up to engage in a dialogue about the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability oppression under capitalism. Emory and U.G.A. Women's Studies Professor Patricia Del Rey, Racial Justice Center Co-director Xochitl Bervera, and MADSA Recording Secretary Barbara Joye presented perspectives on the history of the connections between these issues and the implications for progressive social activism. Many of those attending shared their experiences and concerns, culminating in an illuminating personal testimony on



Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins



Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

Left, Brandon Payton-Carillo leads all in song "Union Maid; above, moderator Lorraine Fontana guides the discussion.

disability issues by Ninah Davis. MADSA Chair Milt Tambor summed up "intersectionality" as "solidarity" and we followed by singing "Solidarity Forever." Many new friends attended, including members of Georgia Rise Up, Solutions Not Punishments, Grandmothers for Peace, Atlanta Women for Equality and Georgia for Bernie, and students from Emory U. We hope to see them all again. ♦

KING DAY MARCH

We anticipated a large, energetic group for the democratic socialist contingent in this year's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day March, but the crowd we saw blew us away! Despite the cold weather, 50-100 people felt the Bern and participated regardless. Multiple local DSA members and



Above, and right: MADSA members out in force!

others active in the Bernie Sanders campaign helped to build this contingent, which marched alongside our union sisters and brothers in the labor movement. We announced the event through Facebook; passed out hundreds of flyers at the Fox; announced it at multiple watch parties; and amplified the event announcement through contacts we've made with some of the Bernie activists. ♦

DOUGLASS-DEBS DINNER BIGGEST EVER

On Nov. 18, a diverse crowd of over 120 community activists and supporters enjoyed MADSA's ninth annual Douglass-Debs Dinner at a new, roomier venue. After an inspiring speech by Bob King, former president of the United Automobile Workers – and a guest appearance by Bernie/Daniel Hanley – we honored Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of School of the Americas Watch; former State Rep. Tyrone



Chair Milt Tambor highlights MADSA's struggles and successes.



Awardees (l-r) Roy Bourgeois, Tyrone Brooks, Minnie Ruffin

Brooks; and our own Minnie Ruffin. The dinner is our main fund raiser, which supports our expenses and allows us to donate to our coalition partners and other good causes. For more photos and MADSA chair Milt Tambor's report to the attendees on our year's activities, see www.dsa-atlanta.org/2016_douglass_debs_dinner_brings_us_together_again ♦

LEAVE A LEGACY

Even those of us with modest means have insurance policies, pension benefits, wills or living trusts for which we can designate beneficiaries like DSA. These thoughtful gifts ensure that we can continue our critical work to fight for our values of cooperation, solidarity, and socialism. DSA appreciates bequests of all sizes. To learn more about investing in solidarity for the future and putting DSA in your will, contact the DSA national office at (212) 727-8610 or see <http://www.dsausa.org/bequests> .

WE WELCOME REFUGEES

About 20 MADSA members were among a diverse crowd of 125 people at a “Welcome Refugees” rally Dec. 12 in front of the Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church in Stone Mountain. The event had been quickly called by the Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition (MADSA is a member) and refugee community and faith groups to show solidarity



Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

with refugees and immigrants, following incendiary statements by Donald Trump and others. Answering a call from the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights and other organizations, MADSA members also joined a march downtown on Dec. 11 to protest a wave of federal deportations of undocumented people who fled poverty and violence in Central America. ♦



Photo: Christopher Hollins

Left: Immigrant solidarity rally, Stone Mountain, GA; above, protesting deportations, downtown Atlanta

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

On Nov. 29, MADSA joined numerous other community and environmental justice organizations – totalling over 500 Atlanta activists – in clamoring for bold action by the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, coinciding with many grassroots mobilizations around the globe. Read Daniel Hanley’s report on the march and MADSA’s role in it at http://www.dsa-atlanta.org/atlanta_demands_climate_action ♦



Photo: Daniel Hanley

L-R: Keith Beaver, Javier, Leah Terry

COMING UP

February Membership Meeting

(everyone welcome) – 11 a.m., Sat. Feb. 20 at the Open Door Community, 910 Ponce DeLeon Ave. NE, Atlanta 30306. Public interest lobbyist and our 2012 Douglass-Debs Honoree Larry Pellegrini will share his wit and insider’s insights on the 2016 Georgia legislative session. Also, reports from Georgia WAND, Fight for \$15, Atlanta Rise Up, Citizens’ Climate Lobby and more.

Rise Again Atlanta: Benefit Concert

7 p.m., Sat. March 5 at the Atlanta Friends Meeting House, 701 West Howard Ave., Decatur. Co-sponsored by MADSA. A sing-along with Annie Patterson and Peter Blood to celebrate the release of their new songbook *Rise Up Singing* and to benefit Atlanta’s Global Village Project school for refugee girls and the Carry it On Fund, which supports projects that continue the work and mission of Toshi and Pete Seegar. Adults \$20, under 18 \$5.

Democratic Socialist Dialogue:

The ABCs of Democratic Socialism

2–4 p.m., Sun. March 6 at the Decatur Recreation Center, 231 Sycamore St., Decatur, GA 30030. Guest speaker: Bhaskar Sukara, founder and editor, *Jacobin* magazine. *Jacobin*, a New York-based quarterly, is especially popular with young socialists.

Spring Tour: Resilience, Tenacity and Self-Determination in Peopletown, Mechanicsville and Pittsburgh

The Peopletown Revitalization Corporation (PRC) and Occupy Our Homes Atlanta (OOHA) have aggressively supported community-based institutions on multiple issues: redevelopment of rental housing without displacement; tenants’ rights organizing; redevelopment of assisted housing for existing residents; the Turner Field Community

Benefits Coalition; and resisting both threatened municipal displacement and gentrification-driven displacement.

MADSA, PRC and OOHA invite you to a fast-paced, interactive program the afternoon of March 19 that will allow us to hear from residents involved in each of these issues and the organizers and activists who support them, and to visit the sites by bus where the issues are unfolding. The program will conclude with an informal dinner and optional protest action.

The program will begin at 1:00 p.m. on Sat., March 19 at the Rick McDevitt Youth Center, 30 Haygood Street SW (Corner of Haygood and Crew St. SW; park on Crew St.). Admission \$20; Students \$10. To sign up for the event, please visit <http://www.resilienceandtenacity.com/> Reservations accepted until March 6, 2016. For more information please call 770-313-4628.

Georgia May Day Fest

Several events in honor of International Workers' Day, coordinated by MADSA coalition partner Atlanta Jobs with Justice, including an Organizer's Ball: 8 pm – 12 a.m., Sat. April 30 and a parade and festival 1 pm – 7 p.m., Sun. May 1. See www.Atlantajwj.org for details as they are posted.

Photo Exhibit: Atlanta Activism

Month of May (opening reception time, date TBA), 1st Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr., Atlanta, GA 30307. Info: Reid Jenkins reid@freejoye.com

Democratic Socialist Dialogue: The "Precariat"

2–4 p.m. Sun., April 24, panel and dialogue on the changed nature of America's labor force. (Location TBA) ♦

Dougie
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 Equality's
guest
column

MADSA chair Milt Tambor distributed this question and answer piece to the Coalition for the People's Agenda this January on the occasion of the Martin Luther King Jr., holiday. –Ed.

“For twenty five years you have stood with dauntless courage and fierce determination...You have given the South some of its most important leaders...The White Citizens' Councils, along with the Ku Klux Klan must be held responsible for all the terror, mob rule and brutal murders that have encompassed the South for the last several months...Organized labor has proved to be one of the most powerful forces in removing the blight of segregation and discrimination from our nation.”

September 1957 –Whose work was King praising? (*Highlander Folk School*)

“This union has stood out against segregation and discrimination not only in pronouncements, but also in actual day-to-day practice... Because of the forthright stand in the area of civil rights, they have aroused the ire of some persons who are not so committed. But in spite of this, they have continued to work courageously for the ideal of brotherhood of men...It is a dark day indeed when men cannot work to implement the ideal of brotherhood without being labeled communist.”

June, 1957 –Which union was he describing? (*United Packinghouse Workers of America*)

“I can think of no man who has done more that you to inspire the vision of a society free of injustice and exploitation. While some would adjust to the status quo, you urged struggle...Your pursuit of racial and economic democracy at home, and of sanity and peace in the world has been awesome in scope. It is with deep admiration and indebtedness that I carry the inspiration of your life to Oslo.”

June 1965 –Who is this person whom King called “the bravest man I ever met”? (*Norman Thomas*)

“Capitalism does not permit an even flow of economic resources. With this system a small privileged few are rich beyond conscience and almost all others are doomed to be poor at some level..And since we know that the system will not change the rules, we're going to have to change the system...There must be a better distribution of wealth and maybe America must move toward democratic socialism.”

1966 –Who was he sharing these thoughts with? (*SCLC staff*)

“A time comes when silence is betrayal...I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences...it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the north over the last three years-especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through non-violent action and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghetto without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today...”

April 1967 –Who is this purveyor of violence? (*Our own government*)

“There are forty million poor people here, and one day we must ask the question, ‘Why are there forty million poor people in America?’ And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising questions

LEFT Justified continued

about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalist economy. And I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's market place. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised ...'Who owns the oil? Who owns the iron ore? Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that is two thirds water?...'These are words that must be said. It means ultimately coming to see the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation and the problem of war are all tied together."

August 1967 –Where was this speech delivered? (Last address to SCLC)

"There cannot be social peace when a people have awakened to their rights and dignity and to the wretchedness of their lives simultaneously. If our government cannot create jobs, it cannot govern."

January 1968 –What event triggered this sharp criticism? (Detroit rebellion)

"You are reminding the nation that it is a crime for people to live in this rich nation and receive starvation wages...It is criminal to have people working on a full-time basis and a full-time job getting part-time income...Whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and it is for the building of humanity, it has dignity and it has worth...You ought to get together and just have a general work stoppage."

March 1968 –Who is hearing this message? (AFSCME sanitation workers)

A white Jewish attorney and businessman, who had been a member of the Communist Party, met King in 1956 after the Montgomery bus boycott. He was King's *pro bono* accountant, counsel, editor, book agent, occasional ghostwriter and constant fundraiser. Coretta Scott King called him "one of my husband's loyal and supportive friends whose contributions to the labor, civil rights and peace movements are relatively unknown."

Who is this man? (Stanley Levison)

MLK wrote the introduction to this document which called for a Program for America. What was the document? (Freedom Budget for all Americans):

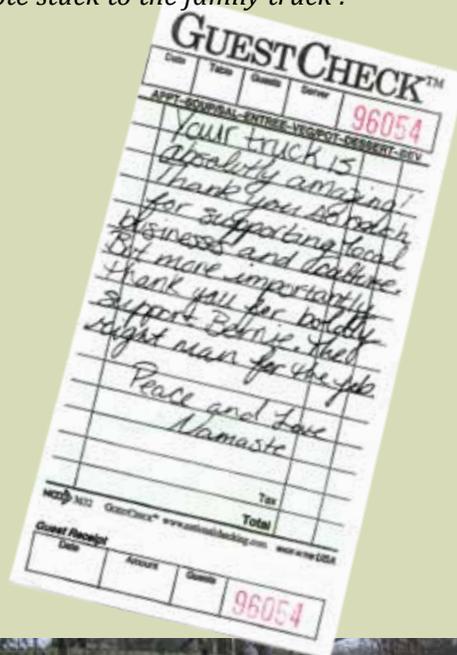
1. To provide full employment for all who are willing and able to work, including those who need education or training to make them willing and able.
2. To assure decent and adequate wages to all who work.
3. To assure a decent standard to those who cannot or should not work.
4. To wipe out slum ghettos and provide decent homes for all Americans.
5. To provide decent medical care and adequate medical care and adequate educational opportunities to all Americans.
6. To purify our air and water and develop our transportation and natural resources.
7. To unite sustained full employment with sustained full production and high economic growth. ♦

Sources

The Radical King edited and introduced by Cornel West
All Labor Has Dignity edited and introduced by Michael Honey
From Civil Rights to Human Rights– Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Struggle for Economic Justice by Thomas Jackson
Dangerous Friendship by Ben Kamin

PLEASED TO REPRESENT

Area MADSA members were recently pleased to find this note stuck to the family truck :



EQUALITY

MADSA Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America

Metro Atlanta DSA encourages our members to contribute to this newsletter. Let us know what's going on in your community—your struggles, inspirations, successes. Appeal for support, share pictures, ask questions, or editorialize.

Send submissions to:

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Democratic Socialists of America: dsausa.org

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