

EQUALITY

MADSA Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America



Photo: Brandon Mishawyn

Some 500 people of all backgrounds and ages took to the streets for a “people’s inauguration” Jan. 20, organized by the recently-formed Georgia J20 coalition of progressive organizations led by communities most likely to be impacted by the incoming Trump administration – but long-suffering from oppressive and discriminatory policies on the state and local level as well.

We marched to the Atlanta City Hall and presented Mayor Kasim Reed with the coalition’s 19 specific demands for policies and programs to protect the human rights of immigrants, religious minorities, LGBTQ people, workers, homeless people and people being displaced by gentrification – to make Atlanta a “sanctuary city” in deed as well as word. The demands and full list of member organizations can be found at <https://gaj20.wordpress.com/our-demands-2/>

Some 20 of our members participated in the Friday afternoon march and rally, which were led mainly by women of color from several organizations such as Southerners for New Ground, Project South, and the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR). Barbara Segal and Barbara Joye



Photo: Steve Eberhardt

represented MADSA in the delegation to the mayor’s office (photo, above). The mayor’s staff sent a written response weeks later, which the coalition found evasive in many respects. We are preparing further actions, while fighting anti-immigrant bills before the Georgia General Assembly. ♦

Growing in the Struggle: our “New Normal”

Metro Atlanta DSA members kicked off our Trump-era protests by joining street actions on election night (see previous issue of “Equality”) and we haven’t stopped since. We’ve marched and rallied throughout the Atlanta metro

area – with old friends and allies and with many new faces and organizations, while struggling to strengthen our own organization, absorb a tsunami of new members, and help both new and long-time members to clarify our shared politics. ♦

Women March in Atlanta Jan. 20

Undeterred by an early afternoon downpour, at least 60,000 people turned out in Atlanta to show their support for social justice and women, as well as their



Michelle Fisher, co-chair, Wesleyan DSA, holds up sign in Atlanta march. Photographer unknown

opposition to incoming President Trump and his agenda. Some media reports place the number of participants higher. Whatever the final number, it’s certainly in the running for one of the largest, if not the largest, protests to ever take place in Atlanta. In any case, it was a terrific crowd.

Prior to stepping off, the crowd was revved up by Rep. John Lewis: “I know something about marching. We have a moral obligation to fight and never lose hope. We must vote like we never have before. . . I’m fired up! I’m ready to march! I have on my marching shoes. Let’s do it!” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* carried a live feed of the march on its website throughout the afternoon.

One reason this march was so huge is because it drew people from all across North Georgia. I know because my sister-in-law and my two nieces all traveled from Athens to join the march! Avanti! ♦

– Walter Reeves (originally posted on Daily Kos)

The March for Social Justice and Women in Atlanta was HUGE, 60,000-plus. But it wasn’t the largest demonstration in Atlanta in recent history. I was there on April 19, 2006 when between 60-80,000 marched on Buford Highway organized by the Alianza de 17 de Marzo (GLAHR). Just didn’t want for a second to overlook the leadership role played by the immigrants’ rights movement in GA for many years in showing the rest of us how to lead mass demonstrations and how to sustain grassroots organizing.

–Ben Speight (comment on Facebook)

Solidarity With Muslims and Refugees

In a spectacular, quickly-called action on Jan. 29, several thousand Atlantans massed and chanted for two hours in front of the south terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, protesting Trump’s executive order excluding all refugees and banning citizens of seven Muslim countries from entering the U.S. Many MADSA members took part, dispersed among the crowd. The protesters carried a great variety of mostly handmade signs, ranging from irate to humorous.

“[I’m] so happy to see the increased social activism this catastrophe of an election has created,” said MADSA member Lorraine Fontana. “. . . This was one of the most diverse demos I’d been to re age, gender, race and nationality.”

Action Continues

Some of us joined the Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) anti-Trump march Feb. 18 and again demonstrated with SURJ and others against Trump’s second anti-Muslim executive order March 11; were among some 800 marching from Midtown to Lenox Square on “Not My President Day” Feb. 20; took part in Democracy Spring’s 1,000-strong march from Midtown to

Woodruff/Troy Davis Park Feb. 25 to save healthcare; joined a rally in Candler Park for International Women’s Day, ending in a workshop on activism 101 by Results; and were present at other rallies and those great “shaming” events at our elected officials’ offices and meetings. Keep it up! ♦



Minnie Ruffin at the March 11 rally.

Photo: Lorraine Fontana

Getting Together

By Barbara Joye

More than 80 people crowded into the Open Door Community (ODC) Feb. 11 for our last meeting at that site. A majority were new and potential members. We have booked a larger space for our April 1 meeting (see Coming Events).

After ODC founder and MADSA member Ed Loring gave a heartfelt farewell (he and others are closing ODC and moving to Baltimore), Hank Stewart read an inspiring poem, "Don't Stop in a Storm," clearly a metaphor for our challenge in the current political situation.



Photo: Reid Freeman/Jenkins

Standing room only at our February membership meeting.

Then, as usual, several of our members and allies reported on our activities and opportunities for local activism. They included Ruth Ann Thomas of Atlanta Jobs With Justice; Ayketa Iverson, national recruitment coordinator for the AFL-CIO Organizing Department, with news of job openings; member Justin Howell, deputy director for the International Rescue Committee's Atlanta branch; members Barbara Segal and Barbara Joye on the GA J20 coalition and the "People's Inauguration" (see page 1). We heard about local electoral races from member khalid kamau, candidate for a council seat in the new City of South Fulton, and a spokesperson for Sen. Vincent Fort's campaign for Mayor of Atlanta.

We also heard reports on our education programs and the reading group based on *Jacobin* magazine (contact acardo1120@gmail.com). Dave Hayward invited us to the third annual "Our Founding Valentines" celebration of Atlanta's LGBTQ pioneers Feb. 15, and Reid Jenkins reported on President Obama's disappointing denial of clemency for American Indian political prisoner Leonard Peltier.

Finally, Daniel Hanley reported on his courageous efforts to organize his co-workers at IBM to oppose their CEO's membership on Trump's business council, which contradicts the company's official values of inclusiveness and respect for immigrants and LGBTQ people (see Coming Events, page 5).

DSA at the DNC

When the Democratic National Committee came to our town the last weekend in February, several of our members joined an effort by the progressive wing of the party to

elect Bernie supporter Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota chair. Props to Teamster Local 728's Eric Robertson, who provided an opportunity for us to meet Charles Lenchner, co-founder of People for Bernie and a Brooklyn DSA member, among other comrades from all around the country who came to engage in the struggle at the downtown Westin Hotel. Daniel Hanley and Evan O'Reilly called on us to join them early Saturday morning as the last skirmishes began. The corporate wing of the party prevailed in the end – with Thomas Perez, the victor, quickly making a gesture to the rest of us by appointing Ellison his deputy chair – but the story isn't over.

See the statement on the DNC election by DSA's National Political Committee: "After the Ellison Defeat: Continuing the Struggle Against the Neoliberal Party Establishment" at http://www.dsausa.org/after_the_ellison_defeat, and see dsa-atlanta.org for Eric's reflections on the election and its outcome, which conclude: "The fact is, Keith Ellison's campaign is just one more demonstration of the left's increasing strength in American politics as a whole... What is happening at the town halls, in the streets, in our workplaces, and in the thousands of grassroots meetings happening across America is infinitely more important than what happened this weekend at the DNC."

DSA'S Amazing Growth Spurt

Over the past year, the Democratic Socialists of America's membership swelled from some 7,000 members to more than 18,000 in over 120 local groups, as of this month. Metro Atlanta DSA's growth kept pace, for a total of 300+ paid members in the Atlanta area, and some 50 more in the rest of Georgia. This trend started during Bernie Sanders' campaign, which brought greater awareness of democratic socialism and DSA – especially among young people – and the November election results gave the final push to many on the brink of committing themselves to progressive activism and the vision of a just, humane, truly democratic society. Other left organizations and causes have experienced a similar groundswell of support, but DSA maintains its status as the largest socialist organization in the U.S., closing in on having groups in all 50 states!

DSA National Director Maria Svart observed: "Our growth alone shows that people want to be for something, not just against Donald Trump, and they want to have a voice."

We are striving to help all our members, new and old, to find ways to participate. Check the dsa-atlanta.org calendar to find out about MADSA events, and see the Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists Facebook page for community event postings. Five working groups are getting off the ground, some more advanced than others: Action (hanley.daniel@gmail.com); Education (miklethun@gmail.com); LGBTQ Issues (travis.reid@yahoo.com); Labor (acardo1120@gmail.com); and Social Media (scott.s.douglas@me.com). Others may be in the works; your suggestions are welcomed by the MADSA officers! Contact mltambor@yahoo.com. ♦

ABC's of Socialism and DSA Dialogues

In DSA we believe that to be effective, we must combine action with reflection – theory as well as practice. The latest in our every-other-month series of Democratic Socialist Dialogues, with speakers and general discussion, and our new five-session “ABCs of Socialism” study group were often followed on the same day by action opportunities.

Learning our ABCs

To help our many new members understand democratic socialism and to refresh long-term members’ thinking about our values and analysis, the Education working group, headed by Ray Miklethun, launched a new project: A 5-week study group based on *Jacobin* magazine’s booklet *The ABCs of Socialism*, an anthology of short articles including some by DSA members. About 50 people showed up for the introductory session, too many to fit in one room, so we broke into two groups: one led by Minnie Ruffin (foreground, left) is shown below. We shared our stories of how we became politically active and what socialism means to us. Sessions 2-5 provided wide-ranging discussions from many points of view, taking off from topics inspired by the readings and facilitated by participants, with new people joining each week. Some 67 members participated in at least one session.



Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

Two Well-Attended Democratic Socialist Dialogues

Our very successful Jan. 15 Dialogue opened the new year and the MLK weekend with the help of a panel of young Atlanta activists from the Movement for Black Lives. Avery Jackson of Atlanta is Ready; Eva Dickerson of AUC Shut it Down; and Asia Parks of Rise Up Georgia addressed an enthusiastic standing-room-only crowd.

The speakers reminded us of the ongoing racism of the U.S. regardless of whether Obama or Trump is in the White House; described how they navigate the tensions between their generation of activists and old guard civil rights leaders, churches and university administrators; and gave resounding thanks to their parents and other family members who helped them become the strong leaders they are today. They also gave advice to white allies who want to fight racism: “We can’t do all we have to do and help you too. You have to do it.”

The following day, MADSA members joined the labor union contingent in the annual MLK Day march through downtown Atlanta, carrying our banner and signs displaying some of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s more radical sayings (behind banner: “Capitalism has outlived its usefulness”) and other pertinent slogans.



Milt Tambor at the airport, left, and MADSA at the Martin Luther King, Jr. march, right.



Photos: Reid Freeman Jenkins

On March 19 our second Dialogue of the quarter focused on resistance on many levels: In the electoral arena, with mayoral candidate and long-time friend of MADSA Sen. Vincent Fort; against racism and xenophobia, with Adelina Nicholls, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights; Asma Elhuni, Council on American Islamic Relations; and Elise Cohen, Jewish Voice for Peace; and MADSA’s Daniel Hanley sharing his vision for socialism and his experience organizing a workplace campaign to petition the CEO of IBM to leave President Trump’s economic council. Over 50 people attended, including many new faces. See “Coming Events” for the next in this popular series. ♦

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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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For information about **Metro Atlanta DSA:**
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For information about the **Democratic Socialists of America:** dsausa.org

Equality is edited by Barbara Joye. Production Barbara Segal.

Labor donated

MADSA Millennials Seize the Memes of Production

By Chase Urschel

Until recently, a small group of longtime MADSA members had been handling social media for the chapter. Since the election, however, our membership has grown significantly, and a new generation of DSA members have flocked into not just MADSA, but also a newly formed Social Media Working Group.



Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

Some of the new (and old) members of the social media working group.

On February 26th, 2017, 15 members of this new generation of millennial socialists crowded themselves into Barbara Joye's house and hijacked the conversation. They spoke in a foreign language, talking about such nonsense as "livestreaming," "dank memes," and "Chapo Trap Houses." The old guard sat bewildered, unsure of what was occurring

right in front of their very eyes. These millennials discussed strategies for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, and even YouTube. They made pacts with one another, vowing to never "log off," or "stop posting." They stood ready to charge into the digital frontier and show the world which Outkast album most resembled the GOP healthcare plan compared to Obamacare and single payer (it turned out the world wasn't ready to hear that Stankonia was a mediocre effort, much like Obamacare).

Within all this madness, however, a plan emerged: increase the online visibility of the Metro Atlanta DSA for recruitment, and increase member involvement through improved communication. Despite the surge of screen-addicted, app-obsessed, and life-blogging millennials into the MADSA Social Media Group, it remains a diverse group in generation, background, and location (members came from as far as Gainesville and Cartersville).

The new Social Media Group will be working in the coming weeks and months to maximize member awareness of DSA and associated organizations' events, improve communication with new members, create the best posts in all of Online™, livestream and save recordings of events to share with members who can't attend or live too far away, and (perhaps most importantly) organize occasional socialist social events just for fun (everyone will be invited). Just as the diversity of DSA chapters improves the national organization, the diverse collection of individual talents in the Social Media Group will allow us to build a bigger platform for leftist politics in Metro Atlanta. ♦

Coming Events

Support IBM Workers

A petition asking IBM's CEO to resign from President Trump's business council, spearheaded by our own Daniel Hanley, will be delivered to the company's Atlanta headquarters on Mon. March 27 at 6303 Barfield Rd, Atlanta, GA 30328-4233 (and to the New York headquarters the same day). Join them from 11:30am-1:30pm to show community support for the 1000+ courageous IBM workers who signed the petition!

Get on the Bus!

"Gentrification and Equity," the sixth annual bus and study tour of inner city neighborhoods threatened by gentrification and stadium development, kicks off at 1 pm on March 25. We will meet with community organizers and experts for an in-depth look at what is happening to our city and the neighborhood resistance, followed by an optional action. There may still be some seats left. For program details and to sign up, go to "Calendar" at dsa-atlanta.org.

Next MADSA Membership Meeting April 1 (everyone welcome!)

It's no joke! Our general membership meetings feature reports from members and friends on their activities and opportunities for activism in Atlanta.

NEW LOCATION: Toco-Hill Avis G. Williams Library, 1282 McConnell Drive, Decatur

NEW TIME: 10:30 am. Starting early, because this time we will have an immediate opportunity for action: following the reports we will invite all present to join the Housing Justice League's

March Against Gentrification at 1pm. (<https://www.facebook.com/events/1196697877045559/>)

AGENDA: Reports on khalid kamau's campaign for a seat on the City of South Fulton's council; the GA legislative session; the Young Democratic Socialists winter conference; MADSA working groups; our Gentrification and Equity bus tour; the Douglass-Debs Dinner committee. Optional action follows.

May Day Festival and Action

Atlanta Jobs with Justice, a coalition which brings together labor and community organizations and individuals (MADSA is a founding member) invites you to their second annual International Workers Day/May Day festival: noon-6pm, Sunday, April 30, at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site, and an action - details TBA - on Monday, May 1. (#MAYDAYATL)

The festival will again feature music, food, artists, crafts, information booths, inspiring talks and a special presentation by several MADSA members and their friends bringing heroes and heroines of the U.S. labor movement to life through the magic of street theater. Please support this event by volunteering for the MADSA table and other tasks: Barbara@freejoye.com.

May 7 Socialist Dialogue

FILM, "Shift Change: Putting Democracy to Work"

Heather Grey, former communications director for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, will lead a discussion of this inspiring documentary on worker-owned businesses in Spain and the United States, 2pm Sunday, May 7 at the Decatur Recreation Center, 231 Sycamore St., Decatur.

Breaking News: khalid in runoff!

Khalid kamau's run for a council seat in the new City of South Fulton isn't over yet! He's in a runoff, with the next vote coming up April 18. kamau is a MADSA member, Black Lives Matter activist, community organizer and Bernie delegate. He spoke at our meetings and the DSA national office sent the word out; members here and across the country responded by phone banking, contributing funds and canvassing. To help him over the final hurdle, go to www.khalidcares.com. ♦



Photo: khalidcares.com

Young Democratic Socialists "Ignite the Socialist Resistance Against Trump"



Photo: DSA national office

Adam Cardo, khalid kamau, Matthew Wolfsen and Karl Grindal travelled to New York for the Young Democratic Socialist winter conference, which was bigger and better than ever. An Athens/U.Ga delegation attended as well. See Adam's report: http://www.dsausa.org/yds_igniting_the_socialist_resistance_against_trump ♦

Standing With Standing Rock

On Jan. 29, a crowd of about 500, including MADSA members Dani Atlanta, Barbara Joye, Daniel Hanley and Reid Jenkins, joined a demonstration of solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux protest against the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) that threatens a major water source and sacred sites. We marched from a rally at Piedmont Park to another at the North Ave. MARTA station. Sierra Club lobbyist Neill Herring reminded us that the Sabal Trail pipeline under construction through our state will take gas from fracking in Alabama to Florida so utilities can compete with solar energy. Marchers pledged to continue pressure on elected officials on these and other issues. See #AtlAgainstPipelines ♦

LEFT Justified

Equality's
guest
column

Afterwards in Amsterdam

By W.B. Reeves

"We are bags of shit that dream."
That's what the Dutchman said.
But he was a child of the occupation.
He and his pals stole schnapps and petrol from the Nazis.
They drank the schnapps,
Put petrol in the bottles
And returned them with interest.
So I'd say, he could say, whatever he chose.

The thought makes me think of Amsterdam,
Where I wandered between myself and you;
Down leafed canals,
Past points of deportation.
Catching Anne Frank's brazen gaze
Outside the tolling Westerkirk,
I kept an eye on the triangular headstones.

In a sensational haze the Slavic tongue murmured
A river sound rising from the back of the throat
Washing against the teeth.
—Had it only been hours ago
We parted in St. Petersburg?—
I'd crossed frontiers unpierced by red battalions since,
Trespassed imperial limits,
To discover Dutch courage.

Still, I recalled our day in Pushkin;
Inside the Catherine Gardens,
Outside the Moorish poet's dacha,
Beside the stone engraved to the blood of Jews.
Your face as we listened to the violin and flute.

"We are bags of shit that dream."
It's what the Dutchman said
And I believed it true;
In that city on the lip of a cold sea,
Between blushed monuments,
Where two women on bicycles stopped by
And asked me if I understood
The meaning of the triangle.

*W.B. Reeves is a member of MADSA
and Teamster Local 728
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