

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Resistance Rising



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Next Steps in the Political Revolution

By Maria Svart

I'm writing this column two weeks after the election, and the weight is only getting heavier on my shoulders. From the moment I wake up until I go to bed, my mind races. I worry about my vulnerable loved ones. I imagine my own future. I wonder how we can meet the challenges of our times and emerge in a place of collective liberation.



You, however, are my antidote. Two days after the election, when we held an emergency conference call for chapter leaders, more than 100 DSA and YDSers crowded the phone lines, first to mourn, then to brainstorm about organizing. At this writing, 2,800 additional people have joined DSA. And everywhere, new chapters are sprouting from these seeds and established ones are growing. By the time you read this column, and by the time Donald Trump takes the oath of office, we will have a new cohort of organizers already fighting back.

Our tasks right now are threefold:

1. Defend the most vulnerable in our communities. We must respond to the wave of hate crimes. We cannot let racism, sexism, and nativism become the new normal. Trump's staff appointments to date promise more of the same, which means that we need to build solid relationships with every targeted community now for the struggles ahead. More on how to respond in the box on p. 9.

2. Stay in the streets. Don't give in to "demonstration fatigue," and do be creative about your protests. Trump's white nationalist, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic set of leadership appointments is a clear obedience test for the public, and we know he will move quickly to destroy the unions, which are currently the most effective organizations to build multiracial working-class solidarity. He will have complete control of both branches of Congress,

the executive branch, and eventually the Supreme Court but may be vulnerable because his constituents are unlikely to approve of gutting Medicare and Social Security as the Republican establishment wants to do.

3. Build a stronger democratic socialist movement, through growing our base of ordinary people taking action for racial, gender, and economic justice. Our base will need to mobilize in strategic ways, in and outside of formal electoral politics, and in and outside of the Democratic Party. We on the left are the only ones willing to talk openly about class and capitalism, about the ways white supremacy is intertwined with it and used by the ruling class to divide us. Talk about the fundamentally opposing interests of the 1% and the rest of us is talk that can motivate the close to 50% of voters who didn't make it to the polls. Exploring why the "white lash" occurred and who really benefits from it, while engaging together in struggles to protect health care, increase the minimum wage, and resist the violent policing of poor people is experience that builds relationships. And taking the time to reflect on the work, who the real enemies and allies are, and grappling with what it will take to win is intellectual practice that empowers and builds solidarity. The conversations will not always be easy. But they are essential.

As an organization with rural, suburban, and urban chapters, in blue states and red states, and with every generation represented in local and national leadership, we can make important contributions to a powerful and independent multiracial movement for justice. The millennial generation has shown an openness to democratic socialism unseen in decades. We'll need to be strategic about how we organize in the Deep South vs. the Rust Belt, in the Southwest vs. bright blue cities already declaring that they will

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Cover art by Frank Reynoso

DSA National Convention

Mark your calendars for August 4 - 6, 2017, when we gather at the DSA national convention in Chicago for three days of workshops and trainings, discussion of organizing best practices, debate over political strategy, and putting the social in socialism!

Fighting Faux Populism

By Joseph M. Schwartz

Brexit has come to the United States. For thirty years now, in Europe and the United States, a bipartisan neoliberal consensus has embraced the benefits of globalization and the rise of the “knowledge economy.” If only workers would go back to school, retrain, and send their children to college, the good jobs that disappeared would somehow return. But those good jobs did not arrive, and voters have opted for a faux populism that promises to reverse globalization. The rise of mass parties of the far right coincides with the failure of both conservative and neoliberal-led social democratic parties to offer a viable alternative to austerity for the many and unrestrained affluence for the few. The same is true for Democratic Party elites.

The Need for a Class Politics

What motivation did Hillary Clinton’s campaign provide for working-class voters of all races to turn out? Her ads stressed her “competence, experience and expertise” and the deep character flaws of her opponent, including his horrific misogyny. No doubt misogyny played a role in Clinton’s defeat. But, Clinton failed to emphasize her platform’s call to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, create jobs through public investment in infrastructure and alternative energy, and oppose “free trade agreements.” She never fully embraced the platform imposed on her by the forces behind her social democratic rival, Bernie Sanders. Yet Sanders’s message did resonate with white working-class voters and millennials of all races. In addition, the symbolism of a woman running for president failed to win enough white working-class or college-educated women.

Many working-class-voters view the Democrats as the party of white, socially liberal, bicoastal elites who look down upon the non-college educated. Both Republican and neoliberal Democratic politicians have embraced a racial politics that attacks anti-poverty programs as creating dependence, while supporting with varying degrees of ambivalence

universal social welfare programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

Narrow Victory for Trump

We should not exaggerate the size of the Trump victory. Elections are often won on the margin. Clinton won the popular vote by at least 2 million votes (or over one percent out of over 137 million votes cast), and if we didn’t have the Electoral College system (created to give increased political weight to the slave states), she would be president of the United States. The deciding votes were approximately 97,000 or just enough to fill a large stadium. Clinton lost Pennsylvania by 68,000 votes, Michigan by 11,000, and Wisconsin by 18,000. None of these states had gone

Republican since 1988. But small margins can mask seismic shifts. Trump’s support from white, college-educated voters dropped 10% from Romney’s 2012 total, while his non-college-educated white vote rose 10% higher than Romney’s. Clinton’s projected final vote total of over 65 million is about two million below Obama’s popular vote total of 2012 and about five million below his 2008 total. Trump’s vote rose slightly above Romney’s total, with an important uptick in small town and rural America, particularly in the Rust Belt (more among irregular voters



Frank Reynoso

than Obama-Trump switchers). Clinton lost in part because she failed to energize the Democratic base, particularly among working-class African Americans and socially liberal white working-class voters, many of whom stayed home.

As of this writing in mid-November, we still need to see actual electoral data, but exit polls indicate that Clinton probably lost whites without a college education by 70-30; and this ten-point swing away from the 2012 Democratic total explains Trump’s margins in rural and small-town white America. Trump’s victory did not depend solely on the white working class, as a good chunk of non-college-educated white voters are relatively affluent small business owners or contractors.

Clinton won the votes of the one-third of the electorate making under \$50,000 a year by about 12 points; Obama won that cohort by well over 20%. (Close to half of voters making \$50,000 or less are voters of color.) If the Democrats are to make gains against the Republicans in the 2018 and crucial 2020 elections (which will determine reapportionment), they have to make decreasing social inequality the centerpiece of their political appeal.

The left and labor must redress the hole in the U.S. electorate caused by the class divide in voter participation. Only 35% of eligible voters who earn below the median family income vote in presidential elections, whereas over two-thirds of individuals earning above the median income do. Overall, only 50% of people eligible to vote participate in presidential elections (only 30% in non-presidential congressional year elections). Elites in both parties collude to prevent the less wealthy from voting via onerous registration requirements and by keeping Election Day on a weekday rather than on a weekend or national holiday. Republicans are more aggressive suppressors of voting by people of color.

Voter suppression definitely cost Clinton Wisconsin and most probably Michigan. In Wisconsin, more than 300,000 registered voters were dropped from the rolls for not having adequate forms of identification or for not having voted in recent elections. African American turnout in Milwaukee County and in Wayne County (Detroit) was down far more than the national 10% drop in African American turnout from 2012. And the closing of scores of early polling stations in North Carolina undoubtedly cost Clinton tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of African American votes. As it is, 13% of African American men cannot vote because of felony exclusion; 25% in Florida. Thus, the movement against voter suppression remains central to the struggle for equal rights.

Still, there was some good news on Election Day. The increasing participation of Latino voters means that Georgia, Arizona, and Texas will soon be competitive states. Voters in Maricopa County, Arizona, defeated the racist incumbent sheriff, Joe Arpaio, and progressive black district attorneys were elected in Cleveland and Chicago. Latinos, particularly union activists, are the leaders of progressive politics in California, Nevada, Arizona, and soon Texas. Voters in Arizona, Colorado, Maine, and Washington voted to raise their minimum wages, and Arizona and Colorado approved measures to require businesses to provide employees with paid sick leave. Thanks to the deep organizing of the Richmond Progressive Alliance, Richmond, California, passed significant rent-control initiatives. And California voters approved measures to extend the current income tax surcharge on wealthy residents to pay for

public education and to repeal the twenty-year ban on bilingual education.

How Can the Left Fight Back?

What is the left to do in the face of far-right Republican control of the executive, legislative, and (soon) judicial branches of the federal government? We must exploit the contradictions between Trump's faux pro-working-class populism and traditional Republican support of free trade, hostility to public safety-net programs, and opposition to workers' rights. Democrats in the Senate must filibuster far-right judicial appointments as vigorously as the right delayed and denied Barack Obama's federal court appointments. Although Trump wants to deport millions of immigrants, Republican elites know that agribusiness, the food and meat processing industry, construction, fast food, and child and elder care rely on the exploitation of millions of undocumented workers. The defense of sanctuary cities and the creation of sanctuary religious networks and safe campuses should be a crucial immediate task for the left. If registration of Muslims is ordered, we must organize all people of good will to register as Muslims. In addition, anti-Trump forces must unite to demand that white nationalist promoter Stephen Bannon be fired as chief White House counselor and that the Democrats in the Senate filibuster the appointment of racist Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) as attorney general.

Trump will go after worker rights and appoint reactionaries to the National Labor Relations Board and Department of Labor, as well as back Republican legislative plans for a federal right-to-work bill. The labor movement must engage in aggressive forms of democratic, bottom-up organizing (increasingly outside the framework of the hobbled National Labor Relations Act) and stop supporting those Democrats who are not true friends of unions. Trump will fail to deliver "jobs, jobs, jobs" to economically deprived communities, because the Republicans will oppose any major public investment in alternative energy and mass transit. Even if he could bring back basic steel production from South Korea, China, Brazil, and elsewhere, massive increases in productivity in that industry and in coal mining mean that most of those jobs are gone forever. And that's not even considering the disastrous environmental costs of deregulating pollution controls on coal-fired power plants.

The Republican caucus will likely oppose any renegotiation of past free trade deals and will oppose Trump's protectionism. The Democrats should lay down guidelines for future fair trade deals that have vigorous enforcement provisions for labor and human rights and environmental protection and that eliminate the pro-corporate investor dispute

resolution courts that trample on a state's right to regulate corporate behavior.

Major infrastructure investment might bring some jobs to depressed areas, but Trump's and the Republicans' desire for massive tax giveaways to the rich and corporations will deplete the federal coffers. The Democrats should filibuster any infrastructure proposal that calls for tax credits for corporations to repair infrastructure and then take private ownership of it. Trump's promise of "jobs, jobs, jobs" is a repackaged version of the failed military Keynesianism of past Republican administrations. He would create massive stimulatory deficits by mammoth tax cuts to the rich and corporations while boosting government expenditure on useless, but somewhat job-producing military hardware. If the left can link opposition to tax cuts to his climate-denying environmental policy through mass opposition in the streets, Trump might be forced to opt for less extreme policies.

We must be wary of a return to bipartisan neoliberal attacks on Social Security and Medicare. The Reagan and Bush II tax cuts each deprived the federal coffers of 2.1% gross domestic product. Thus, today the federal government has more than \$700 billion dollars (or nearly 20% of the federal budget) less to spend on basic human needs. The proposed Trump tax cuts would deny the federal government another 3% or more of GDP in revenues, accentuating pressure for massive cuts to Social Security and Medicare (which Republicans and many neoliberal Democrats want to privatize). Trump's faux populism provides the left with an opportunity to rally around Bernie Sanders's plan to increase Social Security funding by removing the cap on incomes subject to the Social Security tax. Only by enacting Sanders's plan for massive public investment in infrastructure, alternative energy, and mass transit can productive jobs be brought to the deindustrialized heartland and our inner cities.

But the most immediate threat of a Trump ad-

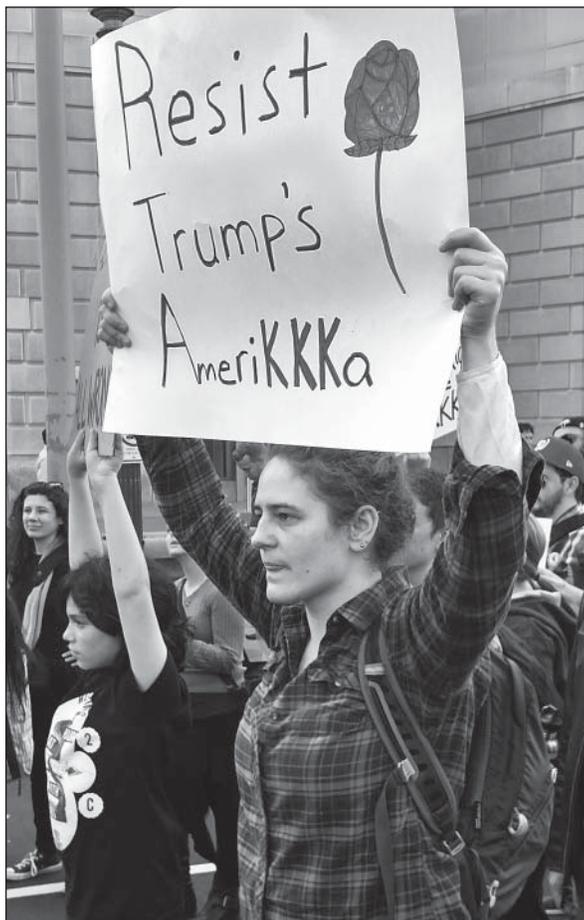
ministration will come from the xenophobic, homophobic, and racist executive orders he may make the day he assumes office. He could well place #BlackLivesMatter on the domestic terrorist watch list. His attorney general is likely to accelerate mass incarceration and defend racial profiling by police. As the DSA NPC statement emphasizes, the first task of the left is to defend the rights of those threatened by deportation, by Islamophobia, and by repression against those fighting for racial and economic justice. The movement that opposed U.S. intervention in Central America created a "pledge of resistance" to protect the rights of undocumented refugees who came to the United States. We must create a

new "pledge of resistance" against all racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and misogynist acts inspired by Trumpism.

The Sanders campaign demonstrated that working-class people of all races can be drawn to a democratic socialist politics that speaks to their needs. In the 2018 and 2020 elections we must work not only to defeat Republicans, but also neoliberal Democrats. The most pragmatic way of accomplishing the latter task would be to run insurgent left primary candidates (including avowed democratic socialists) against mainstream Democrats, though in some places independent candidates may be possible. Only if the left builds multiracial independent political capacity to punish pro-corporate Democrats can we build an electoral force that can defeat Trumpism. At this writing, a week after the election, more than

2,800 new people have joined DSA. As we build mass resistance to Trump, we also have to build a socialist organization capable of transforming the political conversation in the United States. ❖

Joseph Schwartz teaches politics at Temple University and is a vice chair of DSA. For more in-depth analysis and an outline of DSA's plans to resist Trumpism see the DSA National Political Committee's statement at <http://tinyurl.com/hsghw76>



Metro DC DSA member Hannah Walker holds sign at a DC anti-Trump rally. Photo by Merrill Miller

Militias and the 'New Normal'

By Abby Scher

Donald Trump's presidential campaign brought the menace of the "Patriot" movement from the margins to the center of national politics, and there is no reason to think the militiaization of our politics will now fade into the background.

Will we all have to learn the Rural Organizing Project's tips for those facing off with the Patriot movement in Oregon (see box on p. 7)? Will we need to take security more seriously when holding meetings and somehow find the courage to be visible even when our political opponents carry guns?

As readers of *Democratic Left* know all too well, Trump's bullying of Mexican Americans, other immigrants of color, and Muslims translated immediately into his supporters' harassing people from those communities on the streets and in schools. On a New York City bus ride, a middle-aged white couple shouted at a young Bangladeshi American woman to take off her hijab before the white woman tried to pull it off her head, saying it wasn't allowed anymore. Fellow bus riders yelled at her to stop but the Muslim woman was left in tears.

Along with the prospect of the permanent mainstreaming into our lives of such street harassment and armed, white, fatigue-wearing right-wingers, I fear the astounding appeal of the bullying, male supremacist, racist authoritarianism of Trump. We saw it in the thrill of his famous call for "Second Amendment people" to take care of Hillary Clinton, presumably by shooting her; in the joy of the crowds when he said he would jail her were he to be elected president; in his having his security guards muscle out a black supporter from a North Carolina rally because he mistook the man's enthusiasm for a challenge. It was there when he rejected the prospect of being judged by a U.S.-born Mexican American in court. We heard it in his ultimate con, that *only he* could bring jobs back to the United States.

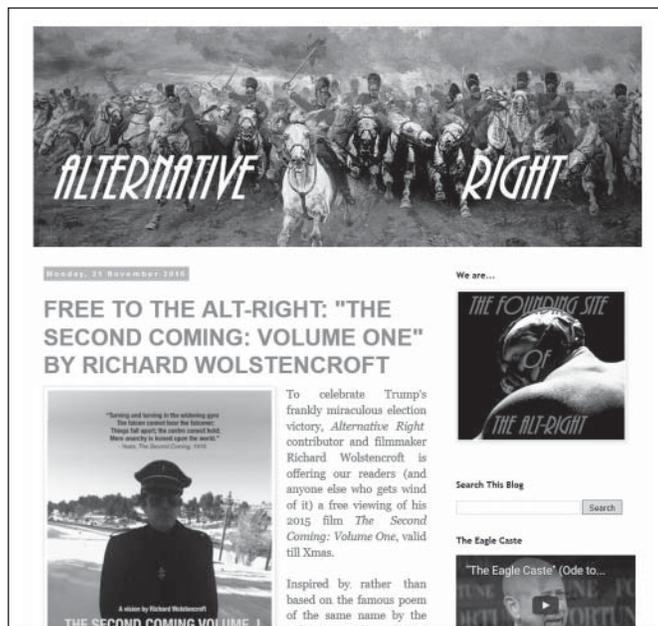
With Trump's appointment of Stephen Bannon as his "Karl Rove" figure, no one can pretend that the white supremacists who presented themselves as "white nationalists" won't maintain their place at the center of news feeds, as they did riding the Trump phenomenon.

During the 2007 election campaign, right-wing talk radio, Fox News and websites gave a platform to "birthers" who claimed Barack Obama was born in Kenya and was a secret Muslim aiming to take over the United States. Instead of subsiding after the election, the conspiracism grew.

This time around, the conspiracism built on the years when the mainstream Republican Party and its media allies insinuated that blacks engage in "voter fraud." The constant investigations by congressional committees fed the McCarthyite feel that there is something sinister to investigate.

I agree with my former colleague Chip Berlet that we are witnessing right-wing populism—Trump and many of his followers

scorn "elites," including Wall Street and the Beltway regulars of the GOP, while scapegoating immigrants, Muslims, and the less powerful. The Trump supporter chanting "Jew-S-A" to the corralled press corps at an Arizona rally reflected corrosive anti-Semitic attacks on the news media, suggesting they can't be trusted because they are controlled by a Jewish cabal. Among populists left and right there is a widespread loathing of smug insiders of both major parties who craft trade deals that destroy living-wage jobs and ignore the growing fear of those in the middle that they too will tumble into the economic abyss. "The Great Risk Shift" described by political scientist Jacob Hacker, with corporations and government cutting safety nets and shifting the risks of the economy on to individuals, has only gotten worse with the gig economy.



Portion of an "Alt-Right" website homepage.

Fascism is a type of right-wing populism that seeks a one-party state and a subversion of democracy itself. Whether Trump tipped into a fascist style during the last weeks of the campaign is up for debate. I'd say his vow to throw "crooked Hillary" in jail and his disdain for the courts and legislature—the other parts of government besides the executive—are at least fascist in style. This echoes Nazi theorist Carl Schmitt's notion of "decisionism," that the person who is able to use extra-legal means to assert a new normal is the sovereign power.

There can be no debate that Trump's attacks on our weak democracy feed into the implied threat of

an armed political culture. His appeal as the strong man who can fix everything builds on a weakened party system hollowed out by big money in politics. "The people" have been ignored in Washington.

In this, at least, he is not wrong. Lawrence Bartels tracked the disparity between the corporate politics that congressional representatives voted to support and what opinion polls revealed their constituents actually wanted. This was true for both Democrats and Republicans. Bernie Sanders's amazing run revealed that more was possible within the party system than many leftists ever imagined. It will be interesting to see whether the

Safety Tips for Events

Adapted from Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon's Patriot Movement by the Rural Organizing Project and Political Research Associates.

Event Framing

Be clear in all publicity that your event is meant to be peaceful.

Call local law enforcement and let them know about the action. If possible, communicate with any law enforcement that you have a previous or good relationship with. Ask for a direct number to call if there are any confrontations. Assign one person to be in charge of this phone number. That person is to call the number if

- protesters are obstructing your event or movement to or within the event
- protesters surround or block anyone at the event
- protesters verbally or physically threaten anyone

Build your local security team. Recruit security folks who are calm, good at de-escalation, and committed to keeping everyone calm and safe. These people should not be the event organizers or play any other role in the event.

Set up a security meeting ahead of time. Come up with your plan, talk through roles and scenarios, and exchange cell phone numbers so that you can reach each other before, during, and after the event. Here are some roles and considerations:

- Have at least two people who can focus on keeping eyes open at all times for any right-wing protesters or anyone lurking about. These people should visibly move between the protesters and your event, never turning away from protesters, even if it means their backs are to the event. Stay at least a yard away from any threatening people. Keep your hands up in a ready, but nonthreatening way. Do not argue or debate. Do have a few catch-phrases pre-programmed, such as, "I think I understand how you feel, but this is not the place," and "We are just going to keep things peaceful here."
- Have a few people who are obviously providing security and a few others, who are less obvious, in the group.
- You may be followed after an event. If you are able, designate a public meet-up spot after your event, like a restaurant. Have a few security team members plan to be there for an hour afterward. Let people know this location and that they can go there if they think they are being followed.
- Have one person assigned to photograph protesters and their vehicle license plates in an unobtrusive way.

During the Event

Have security people and/or the MC tell everyone to absolutely not engage with protesters or people looking for a confrontation. Do not talk to them. Do not shout at them. If they try to talk to you, just walk away or say, "I will not engage. Please stop talking to me." Stay focused on your own event.

If your rally or vigil features speakers, coach them ahead of time not to stop if protesters are trying to disrupt or interrupt. Otherwise, the disrupters are rewarded and will continue. This is a situation where security's role of keeping the protesters separated from the event is key.

After the Event

Debrief with your security team. What went well? What could be done better? If your event went without a hitch, congratulations! But do not think your security preparations were too elaborate. The presence of visible security can deter the protesters.

Berniecrats committed to running for local office can turn “Our Revolution” into something new within the Democratic Party’s shell.

Trumpism now leads the GOP alliance of the fossil fuel industry, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Christian right, and white “middle” Americans. Conservative soul-searching during the campaign ended with the election, as did the need for racist dog whistles as they submitted to Bannon, normalizing a white supremacist in the White House.

What will we do? Along with political battles, not least around climate change, we are creating solidarity circles, signing up to “accompany our neighbor” who fears being harassed, and figuring out ways to widen the circles of compassion. This is the first order of work. We must challenge the distrust Trumpism generates among us. As my friend Robina Niaz, an activist and social worker, told me, “There are more people reaching out to us, friends and allies, than are trying to harm us, and we have to remember that.”

Conspiracism—and the racism it builds on—seems to me the greatest long-term threat that we need to tackle from the far right, as much as any authoritarianism coming from Trump’s government. During the election, fear of those tendencies led some to support “popular front”-style politics allying leftists and liberals in multi-ethnic organizing. Moving forward, we must support news media we can trust and enlarge their reach into local communities. We need to build local voices and local visibility. And we need to do it without the party bashing (or navel gazing) that is a turnoff to the growing number of people who don’t identify with parties or even politics as we know it.

We’ve been working on that for years, but the fragmentation of social media platforms now seems more of a setback than an opportunity. Face to face, community by community, we need to nurture a living, growing consensus among the new power bases emerging—in #BlackLivesMatter, Hispanic advocacy, and labor both inside unions and beyond—and build media that go with it. We need to keep digging new trenches of consciousness from the ground up. We have no choice. ❖

Abby Scher is a sociologist and journalist who writes frequently about the U.S. right and economic justice.



Books by DSA Authors

Once a year we list recent books published by DSA members. Send us the title and ordering information by February 1, 2017.

DSA Welcomes New Office Staff

During a surge in membership because of Bernie Sanders’s campaign, DSA hired new staff who were in place when the wave of new members joined after the presidential election. By freeing the national director of administrative tasks, they allow program staff to be in the field and respond more quickly to organizing opportunities.

Eileen Casterline is the administrative and office coordinator in the national New York City office.

She sends new member packets, swag, *Democratic Left* and *Red Letter*, and prepares other in-office mailings; she oversees in-office volunteers, including the “wonderful people who stuff all those mailings and make buttons”; and answers the phones



and responds to many questions sent to info@dsausa.org. She keeps our information and systems up to date and functional. Her background is in theater (mostly drama-turgy and set design), and she has worked in nonprofit fundraising.

Claudia Cahill is in charge of member engagement and grassroots fundraising.

This includes writing and editing rapid response emails, connecting new members to existing DSA chapters, and helping DSA establish the financial stability needed for long-term



organizing. Her background in theater, cultural anthropology, and teaching has been enormously helpful, as has her previous work in LGBT ministry in the Catholic Church, anti-war activism, and cat rescue. (Yes, cat rescue. As she notes, “In hard times, we all need some comfort. Also, knowing how to herd cats is a useful skill on the left!”)

offer sanctuary for the undocumented. And we plan to be strategic, as we embark on a 50-state organizing drive in the wake of the election. As socialists, we know that acting in solidarity and mutual interest with each other across lines of difference is the only way to build power. I have great hope, despite the dark times. ❖

FILM TALK

Join us for discussions of two films/videos. Check dsausa.org/calendar for details:
January 30: The Price We Pay
February, date TBD: Salt of the Earth (1954)

Metro Atlanta DSA
salutes national
DSA and the
Democratic Left as
we grow together
in this time of
great opportunity
and challenges.

**METRO
ATLANTA**



**DEMOCRATIC
SOCIALISTS
OF AMERICA**

What You Can Do Now!

1. **Combat hate crimes.** Reach out to organizations based in communities that are under attack and ask what you can do to help. Do so especially if you yourself are part of a vulnerable community—we must band together. These include

- Immigrant rights groups / churches, and so on, because the Obama deportation machine is already in place and would be easy to accelerate
- Mosques and Muslim community groups
- Synagogues
- Black churches / BlackLivesMatter
- LGBTQ centers or activist groups
- Planned Parenthood/ abortion clinics

Some things you can do are helping with physical protection such as community patrols or guarding offices and houses of worship, assisting with logistics for rallies, scheduling escorts for community members, whatever is needed.

You can also get together and practice what you would do if you witnessed someone being harassed. Many people freeze up in a horrible situation, but if you role-play in advance, it is easier to respond quickly in real life. There are memes and videos on the Web with step-by-step advice for nonviolent de-escalation.

DSA chapters across the country are developing “rapid response mobilization plans,” whether using phone trees, texting groups, or other technology that can be activated quickly.

2. **Speak out.** Intervene in the public discussion by speaking credibly as a member of your local community through opinion editorials (op-eds), letters to the editor, and calls into radio shows. Trump’s leadership team is composed of white nationalists, homophobes, creationists, and corporate lobbyists. He has already moved to denigrate public protest and control the free press.

The mainstream media are normalizing his behavior, and moderate Democrats are refusing to take bold action. Finally, too many left of center are fighting over whether race or class explains the results (hint: it’s both, as outlined in the DSA post-election statement at www.dsausa.org).

3. **Attend anti-Trump rallies and build coalitions.** Solidarity is more important than ever. For example, one DSA chapter reached out to immigrant rights and legal aid organizations and is setting up direct action trainings for DSAers to be ready to intervene in deportations. Just because your community is not being targeted today doesn’t mean that it is exempt. An injury to one truly is an injury to all.

4. **Order DSA pro-refugee, feminist, and other buttons from the national website** and wear them everywhere to signal that you are unafraid and join with others in the struggle. Give them to your friends to wear, too, and ask them to join DSA!

5. **Strengthen organizations you are already in, or organize informal meetings with friends,** with the theme of “What does this mean for us?” You may be able to form a DSA local or recruit more people to an existing one. Regardless, you can

- create space for people to talk about how they feel and then help move them to action
- watch an online video about preventing harassment and then discuss and practice
- discuss the DSA National Political Committee statement on the election, available on our website
- decide to do solidarity work together

Starting a Socialist Sunday School

Hae-Lin Choi speaks to Maxine Phillips

Too often, when DSA members have children, they drop out of activities because the locals do not have meetings at convenient times for parents or are not consistent in providing child care. In addition, members would like to provide places for their children to learn socialist values and to meet other young people whose parents share those values. Socialist groups and parties in other countries have strong programs for young people, and in the past, U.S. groups did, too. Maxine Phillips talked to NYC DSA member Hae-Lin Choi about Choi's experience in starting a young people's program in Brooklyn.—Ed.

MP: What gave you the idea for a socialist Sunday school?

HC: I grew up going to a Korean church in Germany, learning all about kindness, sharing, and helping each other in a wonderfully warm, communal, and nourishing space. That really had a positive impact on me (in addition to my socialist parents!). But now that I am not religious anymore, I wondered where I could find that kind of community and value-infused learning for my kids, who are four and three.

When I joined DSA earlier this year, I realized that DSA would be a perfect place to jumpstart something like a socialist Sunday school (SSS).

MP: How did you find other parents and why did you choose the time you did? Are all the parents DSA members?

I reached out to a few like-minded families, we scheduled a planning meeting with about ten families, and we came up with an organizing structure and an outline for the classes. We were lucky to find a cheap space to rent for our meetings. We started

an email list and set up a Facebook group. We decided not to make a membership with DSA a requirement but an option.

We decided to have SSS every other Sunday from 10 a.m.-12 noon and came up with the following structure: from 10-10:30 a.m., families arrive; class is from 10:30-11:30 a.m. for the young people; from 11:30-noon, we share snacks and clean up. Most of the kids still take afternoon naps, and Saturdays are filled with other activities. We understand that Sunday morning scheduling is a barrier to families who attend religious services, but for the moment, this is the best we can do.

This is the outline we came up with for the class:

1. Start with a brief meditation to calm everybody down
2. Hello and introductions
3. Sing a movement song like "Union Maid," "Solidarity Forever," etc.
4. Read a book about a specific topic, followed by discussion
5. Do an art activity connected to the book
6. Learn a new song
7. Recap, thank yous and snacks and clean up.

Because most kids were ages two to six, we wanted to keep the structure simple and engaging. We picked a few topics for the upcoming sessions, such as Strike, Saving the Environment, Peace, Diversity and (Self-) Acceptance, and Activism and had parents volunteer as class teachers.

At the first meeting, we had 49 little and big people! Because it was our

very first meeting, we focused on getting to know each other and each other's children.

MP: What are some of the books you've used and how has SSS developed?

HC: Over the next couple of meetings, we had an



Members of the socialist Sunday school prepare for an anti-Trump rally.

average of 10-15 children per session and we began to develop a sense of community. We had great conversations with the kids about why corporate greed is bad for the environment (reading *The Lorax* outside in the park), about why it's important to organize and fight against unfairness (*¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can! Janitor Strike in L.A.*), or about what they like about each other and themselves. Several parents told me that SSS really resonated with their kids and led to discussions at home.

After two successful meetings, we decided to have a guided discussion among parents. Up until then, we'd just had general political discussion, mostly about the presidential election. It was the summer, when in a matter of a few days three black men, Delrawn Small, Alton Sterling, and Philando Castile were shot by the police, and we were at a loss about how to talk to our kids about this. We had a good discussion, shared resources, and also agreed to try to make SSS more diverse.

We took a break in August, and in September we struggled to pick things up again when folks were dealing with the start of school. A few of us met in October to discuss how to move forward, but then two subsequent meetings did not get organized, and I started to think that maybe SSS had failed.

Then, Donald Trump was elected president, and I realized that it was even more important to talk to our kids about love and kindness, about the importance of activism, about respect, support, and solidarity. And I also felt a desperate need for community. I invited all the parents for a meeting to be together and make signs with the kids for upcoming anti-Trump protests. Ten families responded, and eight families came. We made signs and did our first SSS field trip to the Make the Road New York anti-Trump rally.

MP: What advice do you have for others who want to provide such a program?

A few things I learned: Keep it simple, no need to figure out a "curriculum" or have various committees. Parents are busy and have a hard time committing to regular activities. Weekends are a heavily contested time slot. Whoever shows up, shows up and someone is always able to read a book and draw pictures with the kids. Start with meeting in people's homes before committing to rent a space. Although we have a few teachers in our group, no one had ever taught a socialist Sunday school, so we are all figuring this out together.

The community we are creating is wonderful and powerful and the fact that we are consciously raising the next generation of activists along the way is more important than ever. ❖

Hae-Lin Choi is a campaign director at the Communications Workers of America and a member of the DSA NYC labor branch and the racial justice committee of DSA. For a list of material used in the socialist Sunday school, go to <http://socialistsundayschool.tumblr.com/resources>



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Demanding a Peace Agenda

By Lawrence Wittner

The looming advent of the right-wing Trump administration in Washington threatens to worsen an already deeply troubling international situation. Bitter wars are raging, tens of millions of refugees have taken flight, relations among the great powers are deteriorating, and a new nuclear arms race is underway. Resources that could be used to fight poverty, racism, sexism, unemployment, and climate change are being lavished on the military might of nations around the world—\$1.7 trillion in 2015 alone.

The United States accounts for 36% of that global total. Military spending represents 54% of the federal government's discretionary budget, and the military's share will surely rise as the U.S. government implements its plan for spending \$1 trillion over the next 30 years on "modernization" of the entire U.S. nuclear weapons complex.

Given this grim reality, it's time for those who would build a better world to demand an alternative agenda from the new administration in Washington—an agenda for peace.

One key ingredient is improving U.S. relations with Russia and China. This is not an easy task, for these countries are governed by brutal regimes that seem to believe (much like many politicians in the United States) that a display of military force remains a useful way to deal with other nations. Furthermore, Russia's recent sharp hostility toward the United States and the demonization of Vladimir Putin during the presidential campaign make the restoration of Russian-American détente particularly difficult.

Even so, the U.S. government has worked out live-and-let-live relationships with the predecessors of the current Russian and Chinese regimes—some of which were considerably more bellicose—and should be able to do so again. After all, the three countries have much to gain by improving their relations. This includes not only avoiding a catastrophic nuclear war but also reducing their spending on useless, vastly expensive weapons systems and cooperating on issues in which they have a com-

mon interest, such as countering terrorism, halting the international drug trade, and battling climate change.

It is not hard to imagine compromise settlements of their recent conflicts. Behind the hard line Russia has taken in Ukraine, including the annexation of Crimea and military meddling in what's left of that country, lies the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's expansion eastward to Russia's borders. Why not show a willingness to halt that expansion in exchange for an agreement to respect the sovereignty of Ukraine and other nations in Russia's vicinity?

Resolving the U.S.-Russian conflict in Syria appears more problematic, given Russia's military intervention to prop up the Assad government and

U.S. talk of a "no-fly zone," a measure that seems likely to increase the risk of war with Russia. Even so, why not abandon the U.S. government's demand for the ouster of Assad, scrap plans for provocative U.S. military action, and demand support for a UN-negotiated peace deal for Syria? The U.S. government's growing dispute with China over the

future of uninhabited islands in the South China Sea also seems soluble, perhaps within a regional security framework.

The three nations could avoid a very dangerous arms race and, at the same time, cut their military costs substantially by agreeing to reduce their military expenditures by a fixed percentage (for example, 10%) per year for a fixed period, such as three years. This "peace race" would allow them to retain their current military balance and devote the savings to more useful items in their budgets. Even better, they could give the savings to a UN agency funding measures against climate change in impoverished nations.

A second key ingredient in a peace agenda is moving forward on nuclear arms control and disarmament. With more than 15,000 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of nine nations, including 7,300 held by Russia and 7,100 by the United States, the world is living on the edge of nuclear annihilation. Although the Kremlin shows no interest at this

“An estimated 2,000 U.S. nuclear warheads are currently deployed and ready for action around the world.”

time in signing further nuclear disarmament agreements with Washington, progress could be made on other fronts.

One step toward nuclear sanity is to push the U.S. Senate to ratify the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Even if GOP senators block CTBT ratification, as seems likely, the new administration could take executive action to promote nuclear arms control and disarmament. For example, it could halt the \$1 trillion nuclear “modernization” program, take U.S. nuclear weapons off alert, declare a “no first use” policy for U.S. nuclear weapons, and make significant reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal. An estimated 2,000 U.S. nuclear warheads are currently deployed and ready for action around the world, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff have concluded that only a thousand are necessary. Thus, even without negotiating a treaty, the administration could simply cut its deployed nuclear forces in half without any loss in much-vaunted “deterrence” capability.

The new administration could even engage in international negotiations for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. Peace and disarmament groups have pushed for the opening of such treaty negotiations for years, and, on October 27, 2016, the UN General Assembly rewarded their efforts by passing a resolution to begin negotiations in 2017. Why not participate in them?

A third key ingredient in a peace agenda is drawing upon the United Nations to handle international conflicts. The United Nations was founded in 1945 in the hope of ending the practice of powerful countries using their military might to bludgeon other countries into accepting what the powerful regarded as their national interests. National security was to be replaced by international security, thereby reducing aggression and military intervention by individual nations. Critics of the United Nations have argued that it is weak and ineffectual along these lines and, therefore, should be abandoned—except, perhaps, for its humanitarian programs. But, instead of abandoning the United Nations, how about strengthening it?

There are many ways to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations. These include eliminating the veto in the Security Council, establishing a weighted voting system in the General Assembly, giving General Assembly decisions the force of international law, and creating an independent funding mechanism (such as an international financial transactions tax) for UN operations. Another idea, proposed in 1948 by the first UN secretary-general, Trygve Lie, is to establish a permanent, all-volunteer UN rapid deployment force under UN jurisdiction that could act to prevent crimes against

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humanity. It would provide an improvement over the relatively ineffectual “blue helmets” who are usually dispatched by national governments in the aftermath of a disastrous conflict and, ultimately, are controlled by these governments. Action by this “UN Legion” would be authorized by the world community and, therefore, would presumably have a sounder basis and occur less frequently than military intervention by individual nations.

Of course, very few, if any, of these suggested actions are likely to materialize during a Trump presidency without massive public pressure for them. Also, unfortunately, the American left seems divided over the appropriate role for the U.S. government in Syria and over the potential of the United Nations in establishing international security. A peaceful world—like the Bernie Sanders campaign—will require very significant popular mobilization in which peace and social justice activists play an important part. ❖

*Lawrence Wittner is Professor of History Emeritus at SUNY/Albany, as well as the author of *Confronting the Bomb* (Stanford University Press) and co-chair of the national board of Peace Action.*



Populists, the Elites, and Us

By Michael Hirsch

My Turn: Hillary Clinton Targets the Presidency
By Doug Henwood, OR Books, 2016

Trump Unveiled: Exposing the Bigoted Billionaire
By John K. Wilson, OR Books, 2016

What an election! First, shock and bore throughout; then, fright night. During the course of the tortuous presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton and the feral Donald Trump both had large, tub-thumping support sections and ample rubbishers. With the outcome now history, is there any reason to reopen the trash bin? I think yes, because two books released during the campaign elaborate on far more than its detritus. They warn not only that the struggle against far-right nativism and neoliberal austerity continues but also that the political center is cracked.

Let's start with Doug Henwood's *My Turn: Hillary Clinton Targets the Presidency*, a masterly exposé of a politician who talks a populist game but who throughout her career has acted as a neoliberal warrior-cum-austerity-freak. Feeding off corporate money, she is certainly not a liberal, a progressive, or a left populist.

Henwood charts in painful detail Clinton's rise from "the Rose law firm, which represented the moneyed interests of Arkansas," to her defense of her husband's welfare "reform" initiatives, which gutted public assistance to the poor. Her economic record includes embracing (until recently) free trade over fair trade. Her vote for the Iraq War in the Senate and her role in the Obama administration as the most vociferous opponent of reversing the coup against Honduran president Manuel Zelaya and her leading the charge to overthrow Libya's Muammar Gaddafi mark her clearly as a hawk.

The circumstantial evidence that she used her position for what she loftily called "economic statecraft"—aiding corporations with financial deals abroad—is compelling. Microsoft, Boeing, GE and

others appear to have returned those favors with massive contributions to her family's ostensibly philanthropic nonprofit Clinton Foundation.

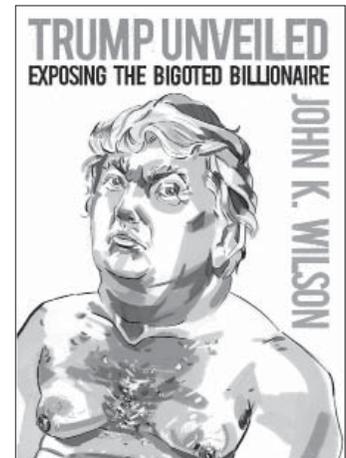
Although many of us would have breathed a little more easily if Donald Trump had been defeated, the actual benefits of a Clinton administration—with the not inconsequential exceptions of a decent Supreme Court majority and National Labor Relations Board—would not have been great. Could there have been even a modest increase in the federal minimum wage or Social Security benefits if the Sanders-Warren wing of the Democratic Party could not prevail? Adam Nagourney, writing in the *New York Times* about her 2000 Senate race, reminded readers that "she went out of her way to note her support for the death penalty, welfare restrictions and a balanced budget."

And then, there's John K. Wilson's encyclopedic *Trump Unveiled: Exposing the Bigoted Billionaire*. Wilson's is a scorchingly fierce and first-rate piece of opposition research, exhaustive in its profile of Trump as a grifter and misogynistic poseur. His comment at the Las Vegas debate that "we have no country if we have no border" ranks among the worst sort of nativist toxins.

George Orwell got it right, in "The Lion and the Unicorn," when he said, "One cannot see the modern world as it is unless one recognizes the overwhelming strength of patriotism, national loyalty.....Christianity and internationalism are as weak as straw in comparison to it." The evangelicals who flocked to Trump's side proved the point.

Readers of *Democratic Left* know this and more about Trump. But Wilson's book is worth reading, to remind us what a bad actor like Trump can do.

What Wilson doesn't deal with, though, is why Trump is idolized by so many who would be his victims. Why is this mad clown popular? The book does not offer a broad enough context. As Joan Walsh said in the *Nation*, "Donald Trump didn't invent



this nativist, racist, paranoid appeal; he just dialed it to 11.”

Maybe the greatest crime of the Democrats is that they gave Trump a free ideological ride instead of taking the fight for ideas to the GOP—something Bernie Sanders at least offered the ideological frame for doing—by bringing into the arena class issues such as jobs, inequality, free public higher education, and reining in the financial industry pirates.

Neither Clinton nor Trump hinted at opposition to the core principles of neoliberalism. Would the response to a Clinton presidency by the left have been a resurgence of opposition or continued efforts to flatten the social movements in the interests of electoral viability? Will Democrats be able to at least win the 2018 state legislative elections and redesign congressional and state district lines preparatory to ending the right’s hammerlock on state governments?

The election campaign points to a real weakness in news reporting. When interviewing potential voters, the media rarely asked deep questions that went beyond a voter’s visceral dislike for Clinton or Trump to what at bottom the interviewee believed either could actually be accomplished or why their

candidate had the capacity and program to accomplish anything that would help them. The media mostly treated its campaign coverage as a sporting event if not a video game, without any sense of understanding the game or the stakes. And now, with the appointment of Stephen Bannon—former executive chair of the oxymoron that is *Breitbart News* and head of Trump’s campaign operations at the end—as Trump’s *consiglieri*, the line between fact and fiction may be completely erased.

And finally, although we want to blame the capitalists, who certainly have more power than we, the left has not yet been able to present a plausible program or an ideological vision that goes beyond hope or “horizontalism.” We might have had slightly more space to maneuver with Clinton as president, but we cannot lose sight of the fact that the center can be as harmful to our cause as the right. ❖

Michael Hirsch is on the editorial boards of New Politics and Democratic Left. Longer versions of reviews of these books appeared in New Politics online October 27, 2016, and the online and print Independent of June 29, 2016.

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