

LEFT

DEMOCRATIC

Vol. XL No. 4

the magazine of the
**Democratic
Socialists
of America**

www.dsausa.org



Spring 2013



Photo: David Bacon

Emeryville, CA – Luz Dominguez, fired because she had no papers.

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2013: Meeting the Challenges Ahead

Maria Svart, DSA National Director

For those puzzled by the whole federal budget debacle, here's a simple primer on the steps our so-called leaders in corporate America and Washington, D.C. followed to get us here:

- Step 1:** Cut revenues by expanding tax giveaways for the wealthy and corporations.
- Step 2:** Expand the military and launch two wars with borrowed money.
- Step 3:** Deregulate Wall Street.
- Step 4:** Bail them out with taxpayer funds when they run the economy into the ground.
- Step 5:** Stand back and wait for the inevitable budget "crisis."
- Step 6:** Demand austerity cuts to public services for millions of people.

Leading up to the sequestration, mainstream media talked about longer lines at the airport, while the Right was holding hostage up to 2.1 million jobs – more than were created in all of 2012. A political movement professing to defend "family values" pushed for cuts to food aid for an estimated 600,000 women and children. This amid revelations that the wealth gap between blacks and whites has nearly tripled between the Reagan and Obama administrations, and a push for immigration reform which could simply erect a bureaucratic dam in place of a broken border wall, let corporations control the floodgates, and still exclude millions of immigrants.

The states aren't any better. Union members in Michigan are still reeling from their state's switch to an anti-union right-to-work (for less) law; activists in Georgia struggle against legislation criminalizing free speech activities like picketing; and more state-level anti-abortion legislation was passed in 2011 and 2012 than in any previous two-year period, disproportionately hurting poor, young and rural women.

On every issue beyond LGBTQ rights, we seem to be moving backwards just four months after an emerging progressive coalition rose up to elect President Obama to a second term despite widespread voter suppression. But the election didn't signal an end to the battle, but rather the opening of a new phase. We held off both the Tea Party Right and Democratic leaders in the White House and Congress who had signaled their willingness to compromise Social Security and Medicare in a December "grand bargain." As I write this piece, I fear the erosion of those few public programs inspired by social democracy.

Looking forward, I know that if anyone is prepared to meet these challenges it is DSA.

2013 is a convention year for DSA. Coming off a successful Young Democratic Socialists conference, we are mobilizing with new energy to train and empower the next generation of democratic socialists. Our 2013

membership drive, with a goal of recruiting at least 700 new members – to grow our organization by 10 percent – culminates in the October 25-27 convention in Oakland, California. We have a new series of monthly activist webinars available to members (dsausa.org/news); revived commissions; and new national campaigns (dsausa.org/get_involved). In addition to our long-standing anti-austerity work, we are committed to concrete immigrant solidarity as central to empowering the entire working class in this country, whether they have papers or not.

2013 is also the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In this issue of *Democratic Left*, John D'Emilio explores the history of the march and how radicals on the left conceived and brought to fruition a mass action premised upon coalition building and multi-issue organizing. Cornel West explains the central importance of the full employment demand in the first march and why it must be revived this year. Through our 50th Anniversary and Grassroots Economics Training for Understanding and Power (GET UP) projects, DSA amplifies the message.

We are not just against budget cuts and for taxes on the wealthy. We are for social and economic justice. We are for a more responsive, transparent and democratic government. We are for an economic system where human ingenuity, cooperation and technological innovation lead to a better standard of living for all, not private profits and chronic high unemployment. And we know that the neoliberal capitalist economy simply can't meet the needs of the 99%. That is a message that DSA is well qualified to spread. Let's get to it! ♦



Cornel West Talks With DSA/YDS

Cornel West gave a wide-ranging interview to Chris Maisano, YDS co-chairs Beth Cozzolino and Matt Porter, and Maria Svart during the YDS winter conference, on the legacy of the 1963 March on Washington and the challenges facing the country and the Left today. For the complete interview, see the Democratic Left blog at dsausa.org.

Chris Maisano: One of the priorities for DSA this year is to mark the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom that took place in 1963. What has been gained since then? What still remains to be done?

Cornel West: When we look at 1963, what we saw was the best of the black freedom movement under Martin Luther King Jr. and the best of the trade union movement under Walter Reuther and a host of others. So you saw the intersection of race and class. It was a march for freedom and jobs, and people tend to downplay the jobs part. But the black freedom movement and the trade union movement were brought together in the struggle against white supremacy, against the inequalities built into the capitalist system.

Since then, we've seen tremendous gains in terms of the black freedom movement, gains in the women's movement, gains in the LGBT movement, and growing concerns over impending ecological catastrophe. The latter issue was not

really talked about at the March on Washington. At the same time, and this is a sad feature of our day, the big banks and the big corporations are in the saddle more than ever before, more than in 1963. Our trade unions were stronger, and therefore there was more of a social contract in the workplace.

That's no longer the case. And you've got the financialization of the capitalist system since then, so you've got a much bigger percentage of the profits going into banks that don't generate anything of productive value. So in 1963 you have companies like American Motors producing cars with Mitt Romney's father George – now Mitt Romney produces deals, but no real jobs. Big money, but no productive value for the real economy and everyday people. And so on the one hand we've got some real progress and gains, but on



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Democratic Left

(ISSN 1643207) is published quarterly at 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 505, New York, NY 10038. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY (Publication No. 701-960). Subscriptions: \$10 regular; \$15 institutional. Postmaster: Send address changes to 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 505, New York, NY 10038. Democratic Left is published by the Democratic Socialists of America, 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 505, New York, NY 10038. (212) 727-8610. Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the organization.

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Michael Harrington (1928-1989)

Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity, and democracy can only be achieved through international political and social cooperation aimed at ensuring that economic institutions benefit all people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements – of unionists, environmentalists, feminists, and people of color – which together can elevate global justice over brutalizing global competition.

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the other, in terms of the core of the capitalist system and the big banks and corporations, they're more powerful than ever.

Matt Porter: When there were rumors about Barack Obama being sworn in for his second term on Martin Luther King Jr.'s bible, you said this sort of symbolic gesture, if it happened, would be shallow. Are you afraid that the spirit of the March on Washington will be lost and that it will be turned into a symbol without any real historical context?

West: I think there's a deep fear because first, the corporate media is not too concerned about the full employment demand – that's a little bit too threatening to the system. They reduce it more to social programs and service programs, whereas the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, which was pushed by one of our members named Ron Dellums in Congress – Dellums was the Bernie Sanders of his day, even though Ron was in the House and Bernie is in the Senate – but he pushed for that full employment over and over and over again. We were at a fork in the road. If we had gone full employment, the trade union movement and the black freedom movement would still be together. Instead, social programs become identity politics, divide and conquer, compartmentalized and differentiated and suddenly these are “your” issues and these are “my” issues. And one of the wonderful things about DSA is that we've always believed in coalitional progressive politics. We never fell for any kind of identity politics trap in a narrow sense. We understand identity is important, but it doesn't trump coming together, unity,

around serious critiques of capitalism in the name of justice for everybody – black, white, red, yellow, gay, lesbian, elderly, and so forth.

Maisano: When you look out at the current political landscape, it's easy to be pessimistic about the future, whether you're talking about the labor movement, the weakness of the left, or impending ecological disruptions that will be coming sooner rather than later. But what's going on out there, not just in DSA but generally, that gives you grounds for hope?

West: An older brother like me, I find tremendous hope when I see folks like yourself, the younger generation that realizes there's a long tradition to build on and creatively appropriate in light of what it means to love people and love justice and love your neighbor. And I see that all over the country. Out in Oregon where I was – it's all young folks. I was at a conference on justice, 1,200 of them inside and 300 overflow. At Ann Arbor, same thing. Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor, packed. There's an awakening taking place, but it's taking all kinds of different forms. A lot of it's moral, some of it's spiritual, some of it's political, some is economic, some is concerned about ecological catastrophe, but that's a positive thing to see. For me, that gives me tremendous hope. That Michael Harrington and Frances Fox Piven and Stanley Aronowitz and Barbara Ehrenreich and Bogdan Denitch and others did not struggle in vain. That is a delightful thought! Those brothers and sisters have a legacy through you all.

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Kitchen Table Economics: What is “Austerity”?

by Duane Campbell

In mainstream economics, austerity means in practice the policy of reducing government spending by cutting social services such as health care, education, food assistance, and other welfare assistance. At the federal level, Republicans and some Democrats seek austerity by cutting Social Security and Medicare. Republicans also are insisting on massive budget cuts known as the sequester. By any name, these cuts are bad.

In the current economic crisis, the governments of Ireland, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal have implemented austerity programs and cut their budgets, creating more unemployment and making the recessions in these countries worse.

In the United States, most states must produce a “balanced” budget. State governments use public tax money for police, fire fighters, teachers, park services, nurses, doctors, social workers and health assistants. State and local austerity efforts cut these services.

During the economic crisis fewer items were purchased such as clothes, cars, and homes. At the same time, more people were out of work, so they paid fewer taxes. States responded to the loss of tax money by adopting austerity policies of cutting government employment of teachers, police,

and firefighters and reducing food assistance, child care, dental care and other programs of the social safety net. Austerity policies can be counter-productive, because reduced government spending increases unemployment and thus costs rise for unemployment insurance and food assistance. These cutbacks make the recession worse and last longer.

While unemployment remains high and economic growth slow, government policy should not impose austerity measures that reduce essential public safety programs for working people and shred the social safety net for the most vulnerable. Rather, government policy should prioritize public investments in job creation, public education and healthcare reform, while raising essential revenues by taxing the large corporations and wealthiest citizens, who can afford to pay. ♦

Duane Campbell is a professor (emeritus) of bilingual multicultural education at California State University Sacramento, a union activist for over 40 years, and the chair of Sacramento DSA. His most recent book is Choosing Democracy: a Practical Guide to Multicultural Education (2010). He blogs on politics, education and labor at www.choosingdemocracy.blogspot.com and www.talkingunion.wordpress.com.

A WORKING CLASS VIEW OF IMMIGRATION REFORM

Article and photos by David Bacon

We need an immigration policy based on human, civil and labor rights, which looks at the reasons why people migrate, and how we can end their criminalization. We should start by looking at the roots of migration – the reasons why people come to the U.S. in the first place. Movement is a human right, but we live in a world in which a lot of migration isn't voluntary, but is forced by poverty and so-called economic reforms.

U.S. trade policy, and economic "reforms" imposed on countries like Mexico, El Salvador or the Philippines make poverty worse. When people get poorer and wages go down, that creates opportunities for U.S. corporate investment. This is what drives our trade policy. But the human cost is very high.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) let U.S. corporations dump corn in Mexico, to take over the market with U.S. imports. Today Smithfield Foods sells almost a third of all the pork consumed by Mexicans. Because of this dumping and the market takeovers, prices dropped so low that millions of Mexican farmers couldn't survive. They had to leave home.



Cleveland, OH – an unemployed man sleeps on a grating.

During the years since NAFTA has been in effect, the number of people in the U.S. born in Mexico went from 4.5 million to 12.67 million. Today about 11 percent of all Mexicans live in the U.S. About 5.7 million were able to get some kind of visa, but seven million couldn't and came anyway. They had very little choice, if they wanted their families to survive.



Nuevo Laredo, Mexico – a maquiladora workers' barrio.

U.S. immigration laws turn migrants into criminals, and make it a crime to work without papers. We need an immigration policy that stops putting pressure on people to leave home and treating them as criminals once they do.

The labor-supported TRADE Act would convene hearings about the way trade agreements have displaced people in the U.S. and other countries. Then, we should renegotiate those agreements to eliminate the causes of displacement. New trade agreements, like the Trans Pacific Partnership, will displace even more people and lower living standards. We should prohibit it and new ones like it.

The U.S. uses military intervention and aid programs to support trade agreements and market economic reforms. This also must stop, and instead we should ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families.

The failure of U.S. administrations to present this agreement for ratification highlights another unpleasant truth about our immigration policy. Millions of migrants are criminalized because they lack immigration status, especially when they go to work.

Since 1986, U.S. law has said that employers will be punished if they hire undocumented workers. This law's promoters said that if work became illegal, undocumented migration would end. But sanctions clearly failed, since migration mushroomed despite them. Criminalizing employment is no deterrent to those who seek work so their families at home can survive.

These sanctions proved to be anti-labor, because the true objects of punishment have always been workers, not employers. We must push to repeal this law.

In any new legalization, millions of people will not qualify because of stringent requirements, high fees and



San Francisco, CA – union janitors condemn anti-immigrant firings.

decades-long waiting periods. And after a new reform passes, millions more people will cross the border, especially if the new immigration reform ignores the need to renegotiate trade agreements and eliminate displacement.

These future migrants will come from the same towns, and are already linked to neighborhoods here in the U.S. by the ties created by earlier migration. They will work in our workplaces, participate in our organizing drives, and belong to our unions. The sanctions law will make it a crime for these future migrants to work.

In one method for enforcing sanctions, an employer screens people it is going to hire, using an error-filled government database, E-Verify. Congress and the administration are calling for making its use mandatory. If people working without papers lose their jobs, it will be much harder for them to find other jobs. That will make them fear joining a union or challenging illegal conditions.

Employers also use E-Verify to re-verify the immigration status of current employees, a violation of the



Top right: Tarheel, NC – Julio Vargas, fired for organizing the union at Smithfield.

Bottom right: Calexico, CA – migrant workers are deported back to Mexico

Left: Oaxaca, Mexico – indigenous women call for the right not to migrate.

law. They seek to discharge workers who have accumulated benefits and raises over years of service, and replace them with new hires at lower wages. This just happened to members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. Employers also use this to terrorize workers when they organize, as they are doing to workers supporting the United Food and Commercial Workers.

In another tactic, immigration agents compare an employer's personnel records to the E-Verify database, looking for workers without legal status. ICE then makes a list and tells the employer to fire them. This happened at Pacific Steel Castings in California, last year. Two hundred and fourteen workers were fired. Over the last four years, hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs in these enforcement actions, including thousands of janitors in California, Washington and Minnesota, meatpacking workers around the country, farm workers, construction workers and others. Employers were all given reduced fines, and many received immunity from punishment for cooperating in firing their own workers.

Making it a crime to work is used to force people into guest worker programs, where workers are deported if they lose their jobs. When sanctions are used to make workers vulnerable to pressure to break unions or to force people into guest worker programs, their real effect is forcing people into low-wage jobs with no rights. This is a subsidy for employers, and brings down wages for everyone. For unions and workers, we must repeal the sanctions law and dismantle the E-Verify database.

Instead, we need stricter enforcement of labor standards and workers' rights. Threats by employers who use immigration status to keep workers from organizing unions or protesting illegal conditions should be a crime. We should prohibit immigration enforcement during labor disputes or against workers who complain about illegal conditions.



San Francisco, CA – Teresa Mina, fired because she had no papers.

Today, undocumented people get ripped off by Social Security. Working with bad Social Security numbers, they pay in but can never collect benefits. The numbers have become a tool for enforcing immigration laws instead. Social Security numbers should be made available for everyone, regardless of immigration status. Everyone should pay into the system and everyone has a right to the benefits those payments create.

In the end, we need an immigration policy that brings people together, instead of pitting workers against each other. During an economic crisis especially, we need to reduce job competition by setting up jobs programs for unemployed workers at the same time workers without papers get legal status.

An immigration policy that benefits migrants, their home communities, and working people here in the U.S. has to have a long-term perspective. We need to ask, where are we going? What will actually solve our problems?

We need a system that produces security, not insecurity; that moves toward equality and greater rights; and that reduces job competition. It's not likely that many corporations will support such a program, so the politicians who represent us must choose whose side they're on. ♦

EDITOR'S NOTE: For a longer version of this article see the *Democratic Left* blog at dsausa.org. Get involved in DSA's new immigrant rights team by signing up here: dsausa.org/get_involved.

David Bacon is a writer and photographer, and will speak at the DSA convention in October. His latest book is Illegal People – How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants (Beacon Press). Coming in 2013 from Beacon Press: The Right to Stay Home: Ending Forced Migration and the Criminalization of Immigrants. His photographs and stories can be found at <http://dbacon.igc.org>.



Los Angeles, CA – a day laborer looking for work.

Bayard Rustin

and the 1963 March on Washington

By John D'Emilio

This summer marks the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. Elementary and high school pupils study the march in class. It ranks with the Boston Tea Party as that rare example of mass protest that is praised rather than deplored. Largely because of the compelling oratory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, it has become an iconic event in U.S. history. How can Americans argue with rhetoric celebrating a dream of freedom?



Bayard Rustin

Behind this mainstream appropriation of the march, however, lies a more complicated history, both bracing and sobering. It's a tale of how radicals on the Left conceived and brought to fruition a mass action premised upon coalition building and multi-issue organizing. The story of the march is an example of how those on the Left – in this case, a democratic socialist Left – have played a key role at critical junctures in U.S. history and how difficult it can be to build coalitions that remain loyal to a progressive vision of change.

At the center of the march, from conception to execution, was Bayard Rustin. Rustin's half-century career as an activist is at its heart an account of a multi-issue approach

to social justice rooted in a socialist ethic. A Quaker who embraced Gandhian non-violence, he worked for decades in a pacifist movement where he argued that peace would never come unless pacifists also espoused a politics of racial justice. He pioneered direct action approaches to fighting racism, while also believing that racial equality would always prove illusory if economic resources remained concentrated among the few.

Rustin had been involved in the Young Communist League in the 1930s. He broke with it, but in the 1960s had close ties with democratic socialists like Michael Harrington and David McReynolds. He always sought to integrate issues of economic justice into both the black freedom struggle and the peace movement. Skilled though he was as an organizer, he also learned to lead without drawing attention to himself. And as a gay man in the generation before gay liberation, he had to navigate carefully around the homophobia of the society and of some of his activist colleagues.

The idea of a march first emerged in a conversation early in 1963 between Rustin and A. Philip Randolph. Another civil rights leader of socialist persuasion, Randolph was the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a union of African American railroad workers. In the prospectus that Rustin drafted for the march, he wove issues of racial and economic justice together. "The dynamic that has motivated Negroes . . . in their own struggle against racism may now be the catalyst which mobilizes all workers behind demands for a broad and fundamental program of economic justice," he wrote. His original plan envisioned two days of action that included not simply a march, but massive lobbying of Congress and civil disobedience as well.

It wasn't easy lining up mainstream civil rights organizations behind a "March for Jobs and Freedom." In fact, had it not been for the way that protests led by Dr. King in Birmingham provoked a shocking excess of



white supremacist violence that spring, the march might not have materialized. Rustin played upon the outrage and the upsurge of local activism that Birmingham provoked and lobbied hard to win support for the march. By June, national civil rights organizations ranging from the Urban League and the NAACP to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee were on board. And, true to his commitment to coalition, with Randolph's help Rustin brought in national labor leaders and white religious leaders as well.

Rustin believed firmly in a strategy of coalition building, but he also knew that coalition was not for the faint of heart. As the coalition broadened, the initial vision of the mobilization narrowed. It officially remained a "March for Jobs and Freedom" but jobs and economic justice now fell lower on the list of demands. The original conception of a multi-event protest that included lobbying and civil disobedience was revised simply to include the march and a private meeting of organizational leaders with some members of Congress and the President. Still, Rustin persevered. He was confident that a peaceful mass protest would be transformative to those who attended. It would make dramatically clear that they were part of something larger than themselves and energize them for further action. And, he believed that a mass march in Washington would propel major civil rights legislation forward – and it did.

The success of the march pushed Rustin into a national spotlight like never before. He was on the cover of *Life* magazine, and central to *Newsweek's* reporting on the march. He now had a higher platform from which to argue for his core beliefs about what to fight for and how to do it. As the forces of protest grew stronger and the Johnson

administration surprised activists by vigorously pushing civil rights and voting rights legislation, Rustin argued that, for activists on the Left to succeed, they needed to engage the political system directly rather than simply remain protesters on the outside. Protest, to Rustin, was a tactic flexibly deployed, not a strategy rigidly adhered to. Yet, while those principles might have made sense to many activists of leftist persuasion in the wake of the March on Washington, by the time Lyndon Johnson was bombing North Vietnam and pouring troops into Southeast Asia two years later, they became suspect.

Rustin remained loyal to multi-issue coalition-style politics. He worked later in the sixties to build support for a "Freedom Budget" to extend the initiatives of the War on Poverty. He persuaded organizations like the NAACP, with a history of focusing sharply on racial discrimination, to make issues like the minimum wage part of their agenda. His successes, including the March on Washington, make his career worth remembering in this anniversary year. Rustin is a reminder of how some of the most creative thinking about movements for social and economic justice has come from those rooted in a socialist tradition. And he is also a reminder that we always need to be thinking freshly in the changing circumstances that we constantly confront. ♦

EDITOR'S NOTE: The documentary film "Brother Outsider" is an excellent profile of Rustin.

John D'Emilio is the author of Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin, a nonfiction finalist for the National Book Award. He teaches gender and women's studies and history at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Take the Membership Challenge!

A poll by the Pew Research Center in December 2011 showed that 49 percent of people under the age of 30 were positive about socialism (and only 45 percent felt positively about capitalism). A poll in 2012 showed that people believe class conflict is on the rise.

But when was the last time you talked about democratic socialism to a friend or family member who is not involved in DSA? What about asking someone to join?

Now is our time. Join DSA locals in the 2013 membership drive. Any DSA member can participate and the top individual recruiter will win autographed books by DSAers or a goodie bag of DSA merchandise – t-shirt, bumper sticker, buttons and stickers.

Just send the new members' information and dues (with your name listed as the recruiter) to: DSA, attn.: Recruitment Drive, 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 505, New York, NY 10038. ♦



(L to R) Bill Barclay, Peg Strobel and Bob Roman of Chicago DSA demonstrated about the fiscal cliff at Sen. Dick Durbin's office in December.

Winter YDS Conference: Hotter Than Ever

By Jackie Sewell

The most recent Young Democratic Socialists (YDS) winter conference, “Students Fighting Austerity: The Future of Democratic Socialism in Neoliberal America,” was held over Presidents’ Day weekend at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York.

The conference urged students and graduated activists to become active in the fight to end student debt, poverty, and environmental problems brought on by capitalism across social, economic and political lines. It provided a safe space for youth solidarity and also worked to connect YDS members and potential members to the larger mission of the national organization.

Speakers presented issues ranging from the media’s role in fast food workers’ fights for justice and workplace democracy to the environmental implications of working to

neries, as well as talking about their success in publishing *Jacobin* magazine.

The conference saw delegations from new YDS chapters, like Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Older chapters such as Wooster College YDS from Wooster, Ohio, and Temple University YDS from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania also sent delegations

of old and new members excited to organize. Vassar College YDS in Poughkeepsie, New York sent the most people, with a total of 12 members attending the conference. These facts underscore that YDS and DSA are growing organizations and that the current national organizer and Coordinating Committee are doing strong work.



(L to R) Beth Cozzolino, YDS co-chair; Matt Porter, YDS co-chair; Jackie Sewell, YDS national organizer; Jérémie Bédard-Wien; Michael Walzer; Bhaskar Sunkara

pass new climate legislation. The main headline speakers, including Frances Fox Piven, Joanne Barkan, Jérémie Bédard-Wien and Cornel West, all spoke on the relevance of student activism and what it means as students face debt, unemployment, and benefit cuts. (For an interview with Cornel West conducted at the conference, see page three and a longer version on the *Democratic Left* blog at dsausa.org.)

Joanne Barkan said “It was very satisfying to speak to and with a large group of young democratic socialists. The attention to serious issues was apparent, and the most common question from the audience – ‘What can we do about this?’ – is exactly what needs to be asked.”

The conference this year had a stronger focus on issue briefings than on organizing workshops, but effectively taught young activists about the importance of internal and external democratic socialist education, leadership development, and campaign planning. It was also encouraging to see former YDS activists and DSA members such as Peter Frase and Bhaskar Sunkara speaking at workshops and ple-



The Women-Identified Women’s Caucus at the YDS winter conference

Overall, the conference went very smoothly and was greatly enjoyed by those who attended. Most importantly though, the conference left YDS members with clear ideas for campaigns and events to take back to their chapters that they will take on in the upcoming semester. ♦

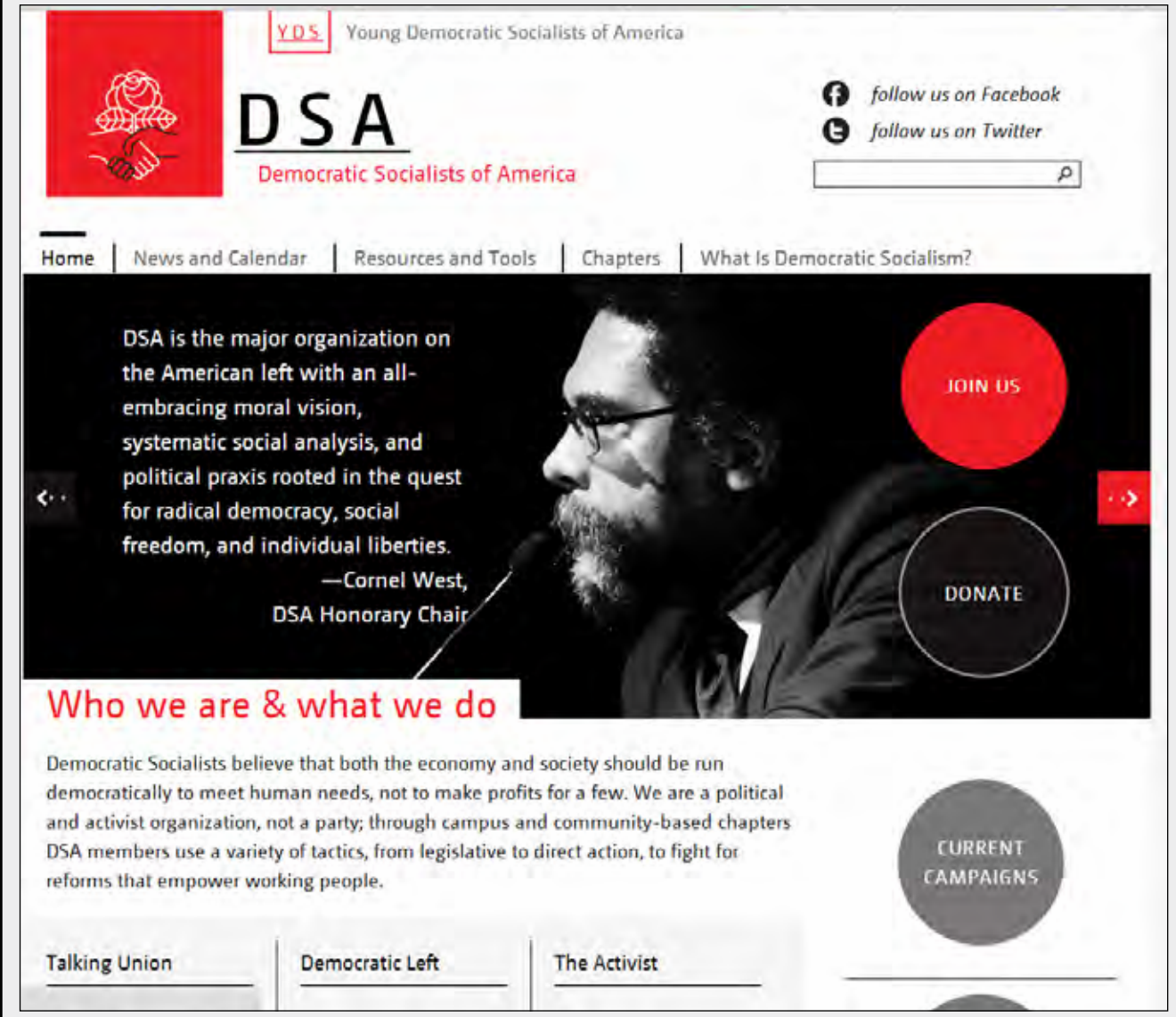
EDITOR’S NOTE: Get involved in DSA’s new student debt national campaign, for non-student and student activists alike, by signing up here: http://dsausa.org/get_involved.

Jackie Sewell is the national organizer for the Young Democratic Socialists.

Visit the new and improved dsausa.org !

Features:

- *Democratic Left* blog with new articles posted every week
- Sign up for new DSA action teams, such as Immigrant Rights, Socialist Feminism, and Student Debt
- Regularly updated campaign information, such as Anti-Austerity resources



Josef C. Gutenkauf:

October 13, 1925 - December 8, 2012

By Frank Llewellyn

I met Joe and Dottie Gutenkauf in 1968 when I was a student at State University of New York (SUNY), Cortland. Our paths intersected in the Cortland County political campaign supporting a successful anti-Vietnam War candidate for U.S. Senate in the Democratic primary. When I met them I did not know that they were socialists, and while I thought I might be a socialist, I had no idea how that could find meaningful political expression in our country.

That campaign eventually produced a group of student activists who organized on the Cortland campus. Joe Gutenkauf was affiliated with the old Socialist Party of Norman Thomas. Our student group affiliated with their student organization and a few years later many of us followed Michael Harrington into the organization that evolved into the Democratic Socialists of America. In the 1960's the ties between the old Left and what became the new Left had ruptured, so it was unusual for a student group, especially a group from a campus without a radical tradition, to follow that path.

The Gutenkaufs didn't dictate the course we chose; we started as a reading group – one that avoided the socialist classics and concentrated instead on articles that tied contemporary political struggles to the visionary radicalism of the day. But one thing we did learn was that were socialists with a commitment to democracy who practiced a politics informed by their utopian vision and that embraced meaningful work on the everyday issues that impacted peoples' lives. We knew that we had to have some national connection, and that insight overcame resistance to the socialist label.

The issues that we discussed and acted on in those times – war and peace, civil rights, expanding trade unionism and building movements to support economic, social and human rights – have dominated politics in one form or another ever since. And those were the issues that defined Joe's activism throughout his life.

Like many veterans, Joe came back from his World War II service in the Pacific determined to make a difference. He attended the University of Chicago, where he received a BA in history. He joined the Socialist Party and became involved in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). In 1948 he served as executive secretary of CORE's Chicago branch. In 1946 he was arrested by the Chicago police for distributing leaflets in neighborhoods adjacent to military housing that defended the integration of the military and military housing.

In 1964, while attending graduate school in sociology at Southern Illinois University, he married fellow graduate student Dorothy Miller. They moved from southern Illinois to upstate New York, where Dottie taught in the sociology de-

partment at SUNY Cortland while Joe continued his graduate education at Syracuse University and then taught at Ithaca College. When they moved to Plainfield, New Jersey he taught at Glassboro State College (now Rowan College) before joining the New Jersey Treasury Department's Affirmative Action Department, where he worked until his retirement in 1992. Always a union guy, Joe was a member of the American Federation of Teachers and the Communication Workers of America (CWA). He served as a CWA steward for several years.

Like many other DSA members, Joe spent much of his activist life in locations in which the organized left had no serious presence, but that didn't prevent him from engaging the politics of the day. He was involved in many issue-oriented campaigns, including opposition to the death penalty, fighting for access to health care at Plainfield's Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center, and marriage equality. He was a vocal member of the Plainfield community and served on the Democratic Committee for many years. He was also involved in Garden State Equality, the 125,000-member organization advocating for LGBT equality in New Jersey. His leadership and commitment to social justice was recognized in awards from the Plainfield Area NAACP and Garden State Equality.

Joe Gutenkauf was a man with strong convictions who acted and organized on them. He never let his passion or ideology prevent him from listening to others, engaging in effective political action, maintaining a sense of humor or working with people who didn't share all of his beliefs. It is those qualities that enabled both Joe and Dottie in the 1960's to meet one of the greatest challenges faced by anyone on the left today: to pass on our tradition to a new generation of activists with different political and generational experiences. I only hope that my generation and its successors can do as well as they did.

At his request, Joe Gutenkauf's body has been donated to the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. ♦

Frank Llewellyn is a member of DSA's National Political Committee and a former national director of DSA. Follow him on Twitter @FrankLlewellyn.



Josef Gutenkauf

photo by Joan Hervey

Don't Miss the 2013 DSA National Convention!

It happens once every two years – your best chance to participate in making decisions about future DSA priorities, and to meet up with your comrades from all over the country. Plus, enjoy inspiring speakers and workshops on democratic socialist ideas and activism.

What's new this year:

We are meeting TWO WEEKS EARLIER IN THE YEAR than usual: OCTOBER 25–27 (registration opens on the 24th)

We are meeting ON THE WEST COAST:

Hilton Garden Inn, Emeryville (between Oakland and Berkeley, CA).

Hosts: East Bay DSA

Speakers will include JOHN NICHOLS, JOSÉ LA LUZ and DAVID BACON.

Locals and individuals who wish to attend as at-large delegates should start raising funds for registration, hotel and travel costs. Details will be published in each issue of Democratic Left, mailed to members, and updated regularly at dsausa.org/convention.



John Nichols



José La Luz



David Bacon

Cornel West interview continued from page 4

Maisano: The president owes his re-election to a very significant extent to African-American, Latino, and Asian-American turnout. What has he done to deserve that support? What must he do to repay that loyalty?

West: As a democratic socialist, as a deep democrat, I try not to look at our society as a collection of interest groups. The tradition that produced me, the black freedom movement, has fundamentally been about justice for everybody. The problem has been, when you begin with justice for everybody, on the chocolate side of town, we tend to be those catching more hell. Indigenous people, Latinos, black folks, so on. So the justice for everybody is going to have a tremendous impact, but I start there. So I'm not really obsessed with him doing something special for black people. I want him to talk about justice as much as about growth. I want him to talk about fairness as much as he talks about growth. And when you're fundamentally concerned about justice, you're going to wind up doing a whole lot more for people who are being treated more unjustly than others in the society.

What he thinks is following his interest group articulation model, singing a bit of Al Green, dropping some crumbs at black colleges, "OK, I've taken care of that interest group, let me go on to the next one." But that's not what it's about. Same is true when he goes to AIPAC. It's not about interest groups. The question is "What does it mean to have a just situation in the Middle East?" You've got to have security for Jewish brothers and sisters, and you've got to also make sure you've got fairness for Palestinians because any occupation needs to be called into question. It could be China occupying Tibet, Morocco occupying Western Sahara, it's about fairness you see. That would be the kind of language I would want to use coming out of the tradition I come out of. But you know, most black leaders don't use that kind of language anymore. We've got such shameful silence among black leaders, and such shameful capitulation to the neoliberal politics of the black president.

Maisano: This brings me back to something that we talked about earlier – the splitting of class-based and identity politics. To what extent do you think those of us on the Left have been complicit in that in privileging gains on the basis of ascriptive identity as opposed to a justice-for-all project, a class project?

West: DSA is in no way perfect, but we've always put the class character of American society at the center of things. We recognize that identity politics not only has its place, but is real. Male supremacy is real. It's a lie, but it's very entrenched in our society and has to be hit head on. In DSA, the feminist voices have always connected the issue back to the society's class character. The same has been true of Manning Marable and myself, running *Third World Socialist*, the magazine we ran for a while, or brother Duane Campbell, the brother who's always connecting Latino politics to class politics.

But it's also true that class politics was superseded among progressives as a whole. In DSA, we held on to our identities, but we were in no way in control of that broader shift. We've held on for so long, and one of the reasons why we're able to grow now is that we've been consistent, we really have. You always have the red Left, my brother Carl Dix and the others whom I work very closely with, who say "You're just pink social democrats, not really revolutionaries. We like that you talk about class but you don't talk about empire enough." That's a good dialogue. That's a good discussion. We learn something from anarchists. We have a deep suspicion of the authoritarian tendencies of the nation-state, so rights and liberties are very important. We have our own identities, and people can go at it in different ways. ♦

Cornel West is an honorary chair of DSA; professor emeritus of African American studies at Princeton and of religious philosophy and Christian studies at Union Theological Seminary; and author of 19 books including his latest, with Tavis Smiley: The Rich and the Rest of Us (2012).

Québec Students Strike for Free Higher Education: Interview with Jérémie Bédard-Wien

Québec student leader Jérémie Bédard-Wien attended the recent Young Democratic Socialists student conference in New York city as an official representative of the Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ), formerly CLASSE, the national student organization formed to stop tuition hikes in Québec. Jérémie has acted as treasurer, co-spokesperson, and member of the executive committee of ASSÉ, and he sat down after the plenary session for an interview with Democratic Left.

Maria Svart, DSA: We just got out of a great panel where you discussed the student strike in Québec, and we think there are a lot of parallels but also a lot of lessons and contrasts with the student movement here in the US and with some of the work that YDS is doing even. So can you start by telling us a little bit about the history of the strike, what sparked it, and how you ultimately were able to win?

Jérémie Bédard-Wien: Well, it starts in 1969. I will spare you the 40 years of syndicalist history in Québec, which is rather important because we were able to draw from these past experiences to mobilize for the strike, how past strikes succeeded, what they were like, so on and so forth. Very extensive archives for the student movements.

But the preparations for the current strike started in 2010 when the tuition hike was first announced. It was to start going into effect two years later, so we were given two years' warning, thankfully, which we were able to use to properly mobilize. So we went on several one-day strikes, at least four or five during that time to allow for an escalation of some kind – starting small toward a general strike. It requires a lot of time, a lot of mobilization. And mobilization was indeed our focus for those two years. There were mobilization committees at every union where people could come in, learn about these issues, and in turn mobilize others, hand out propaganda over a long period of time. Constant mobilization rather than periodic mobilization – when you have nothing to mobilize for you just mobilize over information regarding the tuition hikes, their effects, and so on.

From the get-go, we used systemic analysis to get our point across, and our analysis of the tuition hikes encompassed not just the economics of it, the number (\$1,625) but also drew the tuition hike into a broader analysis of politics, of this being part of a systematic neoliberal shift in public services in Québec, which used to be entirely free and accessible to all (except education, which always had rather low tuition fees). We contrasted this with our vision for education – which is to be free to all, funded by the taxpayers, and accessible to everyone including international students and

free of corporate influence, which we see as a very subtle influence on the politics of higher education – how we perceive higher education, where funds are invested, this is also something we sought to denounce

So two years. Two years where we also held general assemblies which we always do to decide what the union should do and bring more and more people into those methods of decision making, which are hallmarks of our model of direct democracy. We all knew that we were going to have to go on a general strike to defeat the tuition hike because governments don't move that easily in the history of Québec. But this was



something that we could establish only after a fair amount of mobilization and action had been done already. And so in November 2011 we did a protest, and 30,000 people showed up. We did it in collaboration with other national student unions that are less radical than ASSÉ, and at that point we created CLASSE as a coalition to quickly get other unions to join on the premise of defeating the tuition hike from the perspective of free education and also on the premise of participatory democracy.

In January and February 2012, we mobilized quickly for the general strike. At that point we had done our own work for the tuition hike itself, people were convinced that this was a bad measure and that we had to attack it, now we just had to make the case for this ultimate method of action. It's important to say that the general strike is not only a way of getting people out to demonstrations. It has its own economic effects, and the most economically threatening part of that movement, much more so than the demonstrations or anything because you still have to pay teachers, you still have to pay staff at the university and other colleges all throughout the strike, and every day that you strike adds up through the semester, which when the strike ends will have to be retaken. So the strike cost \$3 million for the government per day at some points. And more problematically, it threatens the cancellation of the semester. At some point, you can only cancel the semester and start the next one, which means that everyone who would graduate this semester will go on for another semester and will keep his or her place at the university or the college, which means someone else will not take that place. So it delays the entry of an entire graduating class into the job market. That creates untold amounts of economic

damage because the job market expects a number of graduates every year. So that's what the effects of the strike were.

Svart: And you mention 40 years of syndicalist history in Québec. So what kind of foundation existed in Québec that can be contrasted with here? The second question is what kind of organizing tactics did you use? You mentioned in your talk that it wasn't just social media – you went out at 6 in the morning every day to leaflet and talk to every single student.

Bédard-Wien: When I say “syndicalist history,” I mean student syndicalism. There wasn't much union/labor syndicalism anywhere in Québec either. It started in the 1960s, as most of those movements did. There were a number of movements happening all at once, this was the height of the sovereigntist movement as well, so there was a campaign to make McGill into a Francophone university. In 1969 we had our first general strike on the issue of the crippling lack of accessibility to higher education at the time. We had colleges that had just been created, but they weren't prepared to accept many students. So this general strike demanded loans and bursaries and better accessibility to higher education, and in response to that the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) network, which is kind of like the UC system in California was created, the first victory of the student movement in Quebec. These structures kept running, and we had nine general strikes to further and defend accessibility, defeat tuition hikes, defeat reforms, privatization and so on on different issues.

It keeps on continuing even through the 1990s, which were a dark time for the Left everywhere. The big hegemonic student organization at the time, which was in every student organization in the province, which had been going strong in the 1970s stumbled in the 1980s and became a bureaucratic monster with very little political ambition, and it was finally killed off in the 1990s. That gave rise to new corporatist unions founded on the premise of not going on strike, which we have to deal with to this day. But things picked up again on syndicalist foundations and ASSÉ was created in 2001 to draw on the failures of past organizations and the successes of a certain brand of combative syndicalism.

To build an organization like ASSÉ, you need to draw people in. Draw them in through meetings, draw them in through general assemblies, draw people in through political spaces of organization. And that's done through intense mobilization through this print culture that we developed. We printed newspapers, we printed tracts, leaflets, fliers, and gave them out in record numbers every day. We have a printer that never stops. We're terrible environmentally that way, but I think it's worthwhile. You just have to get a piece of paper in someone's hands, and that becomes a way to strike up a conversation to confront them on their received ideas and challenge their conceptions of education and political action and make them move over to your side. That takes a lot of time, but that's what we did over two years, we talked to people. It's a lost habit, really.

Svart: To what extent did your political ideas help to stop the tuition hike and defeat Bill 78 (a defeated bill which would have criminalized the strike)?

Bédard-Wien: If we were only going to talk about the tuition hike itself and the \$1,625 it would have lasted for three weeks. The government would have offered us something insignificant and students would have accepted it because they would not have any kind of further analysis than just the numbers. “Let's just have a smaller increase, that's totally fine.” When you challenge the idea of paying for education itself, it creates a lot of resolve among the student body. Some even took on mandates to go on strike indefinitely until we had free education, and these were in general assemblies of thousands. It made our strike much stronger. Even though we had many offers on the table, they were repeatedly rejected. The freeze was the minimal compromise we could have done to end the strike. This radicalism was not only expressed by student leaders, it was expressed in general assemblies. It was expressed by single mothers, by



those who came in the streets to support us but weren't students. It was not only a rhetoric belonging to the enlightened leaders but in the general student body you encountered it fairly often. It did more for radical anti-capitalist movements than most of what these organizations do themselves.

But then again, the strike doesn't belong to one organization. It's an opportunity, it's a platform. Once you go on strike you're liberated from the constraints of traditional political thought and the constraints of being occupied with school, so you can do a lot more than simply challenge the tuition hike.

Within days of this interview, ASSÉ had mobilized ten thousand students to protest the new government's education summit, breaking with their more moderate colleagues in the student federations who participated in the summit while still pushing for a tuition freeze. The rest of the interview can be read at dsausa.org. ♦

Maria Svart is DSA's national director. Photo credit: Mario Jean. Our thanks to the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung for bringing Jérémie to NYC.

DSA Values Bequests of All Sizes

You don't have to be wealthy to leave a meaningful legacy gift to aid the socialist cause and our future. Many of those of us with modest means have insurance policies, pension benefits, wills or living trusts for which we designate beneficiaries. The "Democratic Socialists of America, Inc." can be one such beneficiary. Many bank accounts including checking, money market, savings accounts and certificates of deposit or IRA accounts have survivor provisions allowing you to designate a survivor who assumes ownership of the account after your death.

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