

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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BUILD THE MOVEMENT &

FIGHT

THE

RIGHT



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WHAT WE STAND FOR

Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower student-teacher ratios. Stop the focus on high stakes testing and the drive to privatize public education.
- ✦ Free, high quality health care for all. Replace the failed for-profit insurance companies with a publicly funded single-payer system as a step towards fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ No budget cuts to education and social services! Full funding for all community needs. A major increase in taxes on the rich and big business, not working people.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ For rent control combined with massive public investment in affordable housing.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ A minimum guaranteed weekly income of \$600/week for the unemployed, disabled, stay-at-home parents, the elderly, and others unable to work.
- ✦ Repeal all anti-union laws like Taft-Hartley. For democratic unions run by the rank-and-file to fight for better pay, working conditions, and social services. Full-time union officials should be regularly elected and receive the average wage of those they represent.
- ✦ No more layoffs! Take bankrupt and failing companies into public ownership.
- ✦ Break the power of Wall Street! For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ Shorten the workweek with no loss in pay and benefits; share out the work with the unemployed and create new jobs.

Environmental Sustainability

- ✦ Fight climate change. Massive public investment in renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low fare, high-speed, and accessible transit.
- ✦ Democratic public ownership of the big energy companies, retooling them for socially necessary green production. A "Just Transition" for all workers in polluting industries with guaranteed re-training and new living-wage jobs.

Equal Rights for All

- ✦ Fight discrimination based on race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, and all other forms of prejudice. Equal pay for equal work.
- ✦ Black Lives Matter! Build a mass movement against police brutality and the institutional

racism of the criminal justice system. Invest in rehabilitation, job training, and living-wage jobs, not prisons! Abolish the death penalty.

- ✦ Defend immigrant rights! Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ Fight sexual harassment, violence against women, and all forms of sexism.
- ✦ Defend a woman's right to choose whether and when to have children. For a publicly funded, single-payer health care system with free reproductive services, including all forms of birth control and safe, accessible abortions. Comprehensive sex education. At least 12 weeks of paid family leave for all. For universal, high quality, affordable and publicly run child care.
- ✦ Fight discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community, and all forms of homophobia and transphobia.

Money for Jobs and Education, Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, NDAA, and all other attacks on democratic rights.

Break with the Two Parties of Big Business

- ✦ For a mass workers party drawing together workers, young people and activists from environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and other social movement organizations should stop funding and supporting the Democratic and Republican Parties and instead organize independent left-wing, anti-corporate candidates and coalitions as a first step toward building a workers' party.

Socialism and Internationalism

- ✦ Capitalism produces poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, and war. We need an international struggle against this failed system. No to corporate "free trade" agreements, which mean job losses and a race to the bottom for workers and the environment.
- ✦ Solidarity with the struggles of workers and oppressed peoples internationally: An injury to one is an injury to all.
- ✦ Take into public ownership the top 500 corporations and banks that dominate the U.S. economy. Run them under the democratic management of elected representatives of the workers and the broader public. Compensation to be paid on the basis of proven need to small investors, not millionaires.
- ✦ A democratic socialist plan for the economy based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people and the environment. For a socialist United States and a socialist world. ✦

WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

Jai Chavis Student Worcester, MA



When I was as young as seven years old, my grandmother began giving me crash courses on how to interact with police. Me becoming the victim of police brutality has always been one of her greatest fears. My mother fears that I will be the next Trayvon Martin or Tamir Rice. It is this fear, and the fear of so many people of color, that pushes me to struggle for socialism.

During the 2016 election cycle, I desperately searched for genuine solutions to the problems of police brutality, as well as mass incarceration, and all the Democrats offered were bodycams and minor reforms. While I did not yet understand the Democrats deference to the police, I understood that this was not the party that would fight police repression. I understood that this was the party that, as official policy, shunned and refused to make any promises of reforms to Black Lives Matter activists.

It was at this period in my development that I was introduced to Socialist Alternative and attended a lead-off focusing on BLM and the struggle against police violence. While still very new to socialism at the time, I had finally found an organization truly dedicated to ending police brutality and who presented

concrete, democratic ways to make that happen.

But, as Malcom X so eloquently put it "you can't have capitalism without racism." Though we can drastically reduce police violence under capitalism, no amount of reforms can remove the racism, sexism, transphobia, wage exploitation, etc. The only way to concretely end these modes of oppression, is through replacing the capitalist system entirely. This is why I continue to struggle for socialism because this is a struggle for real change and for real democracy.

Trump has flippantly joked that police should use more force, while the Democrats present no actual solutions for the issue of police brutality. We cannot wait on the Democrats to save us. That day will never come. We, the working class, must liberate ourselves! There is a Nina Simone quote that goes "I'll tell you what freedom is to me. No fear!" For me, socialism is a struggle against the fear the working class is forced to suffer through and succumb to under capitalism. Until we replace the system of capitalism with socialism, the working class will forever know fear and can never feel freedom. ✦

Town Hall: Draft Bernie for a People's Party

Calvin Priest

What will it take to defeat Trump's agenda and to win the progressive policies that Bernie Sanders campaigned for and millions of Americans support? With the 2018 mid-term elections looming, should working people continue the fight to reform the Democratic Party, or should we prepare the ground to create something new?

On September 8-10, Socialist Alternative, Draft Bernie, and the Progressive Independent Party will host the People's Convergence Conference in Washington D.C., calling on Bernie Sanders to launch a "people's party."

The main event will be the Draft Bernie Town Hall, featuring Cornel West, Kshama Sawant and Draft Bernie founder Nick Brana. Bernie Sanders has been invited to attend.

The Democratic establishment remains fiercely determined to defend its close ties to big business. In spite of massive support for single-payer health care, the Democrats' "Better Deal" for the coming

elections has kept this and other central issues off the table. Pelosi, Schumer and Co. prefer to risk further losses to the right wing, rather than accepting progressive policies that would endanger their corporate support.

The current struggle by Berniecrats to "take back" the Democratic party is a continuation of the fight for anti-corporate politics that Sanders' waged last year. While there is no doubt that this is where the main energy is at present, in our view these efforts are highly unlikely to succeed. It is time for working people and activists to begin a serious discussion about a new major party, to draw up a balance sheet of recent efforts, to explore what a people's party would look like, and to talk about strategies for our movement and what will be needed to defeat Trump and the right wing.

Draft Bernie will also use the opportunity to deliver its more than 45,000 petition signatures to Bernie Sanders' office calling on him to launch a people's party.

Register to attend at www.convergence2017.org ✦

Join

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Trump Regime in Disarray

The Fight Against the Right Has Only Begun!

Tom Crean

August 10 – Seven months after Trump's inauguration, his regime is mired in deep crisis and key parts of his agenda are stalled despite Republican control of Congress. The health care debacle in particular is a severe blow to Trump and the Republican leadership as a whole. Trump is desperately looking to divert attention from the political setbacks and the crisis of his administration. This is certainly a factor in the saber rattling against North Korea which as we go to press has reached unprecedented levels.

Health Care Fiasco

After making the repeal of Obamacare a central party plank for seven years, none of the variations of Trumpcare could muster even 20% support in opinion polls. And for good reason: Trumpcare was a vicious attack against working people generally, but especially the poor, women, and disabled people in order to give the super-rich a massive tax break.

As Socialist Alternative has pointed out, what the Republicans have actually accomplished is to make Medicare for All and single-payer health care far more popular than ever before. But this victory against the right did not happen by itself: it took tens of thousands protesting, standing up in Republican politicians' town halls, and calling and emailing their representatives. Bernie Sanders led the way, holding rallies in key areas and inspiring people with his advocacy for Medicare for All, but the Democratic Party leadership refused to mobilize ordinary people in the streets while the unions and other progressive organizations missed a key opportunity to take the mass movement against Trump to a new level.

Trumpcare also put the serious divisions within the Republican Party on vivid display. One wing will not be satisfied unless all "entitlements" including Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security are gutted and privatized, while another wing

correctly fears for their jobs if they follow this line. These divisions will continue to play out in the fall with the budget and tax reform.

Boundless Chaos

It has been hard to stop watching the train wreck that is Trump's White House. Trump, the tweeter in chief, dug his whole yet deeper in recent weeks by threatening to remove his uber-reactionary Attorney General, Jeff Sessions. His real goal though is to get rid of Robert Mueller, the special counsel, investigating the Trump campaign's ties with the Russian regime and now probably also looking into Trump's highly dubious finances.

Removing Sessions and Mueller would provoke the biggest political crisis to date. Trump has so far been forced to back off by the opposition of top Republican leaders. Some Republican Senators, like Jeff Flake, are now becoming bolder in their criticisms of Trump whom they increasingly see as terminally incompetent and a danger to their own plans.

Trump instead moved to purge the West Wing, including Reince Priebus linked to the Republican establishment, as well as others associated with Priebus like Sean Spicer. The net effect of this is that Trump has distanced himself further from the Republican leadership.

Meanwhile Trump has moved ever closer to the so-called "movement conservatives" including the Christian right, anti-immigration groups, the extreme anti-taxation crowd and of course Fox News and the NRA. Many of these groups represent the traditional far right, before the arrival of the alt-right. Tony Perkins, President of the Christian right Family Research Council told *The New York Times* (8/3/17), "I've been to the White House I don't know how many more times in the first six months of this



Everywhere the GOP held town halls about health care, they were met with fury.

year than I was during the entire Bush administration."

These organizations are not just happy with the access; they believe the Trump administration is getting things done...for them. And there is some truth in this. Trump got Neil Gorsuch onto the Supreme Court. Jeff Sessions may be maligned by Trump but he has made clear that the Department of Justice will not pursue consent decrees with police department and instead aims to let the police "off the leash". He is also pursuing maximum sentences in drug cases and going after what's left of affirmative action.

ICE is also given a free hand, which makes the traditional far right happy, as has Trump's proposal to cut *legal* immigration in half. The latest development is Trump's threatened ban on transgender people in the military, a clear sop to the Christian right. And there is more to come including trying to criminalize dissent and bolder anti-union measures.

All told, these "movement conservative" groups have the support of only a small minority of the American population but it is a very big part of those who vote in Republican primaries. In this way, Trump can keep most of the restive Republican politicians in tow, at least for now, by threatening to unleash the movement conservatives against them even as his overall poll numbers continue to drop.

One factor that has prevented

an even worse cratering of Trump's support are the relatively good economic figures, even though they mask massive inequality and the deep social crisis facing the working class. There are, however, signs of economic overheating and a tipping into recession would decisively end any illusions that Trump was "bringing good jobs back".

Democrats Prepare for 2018

The other factor that has helped Trump is the weakness of the Democratic Party. It is remarkable that seven months into this deeply unpopular and unhinged regime, the Democrats have lower favorability ratings than Trump!

The party establishment, including Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, recently launched its "Better Deal" initiative to appeal to working class voters in advance of the 2018 midterm elections and answer the question of what they stand for besides getting rid of Trump. While this did include calling for a federal \$15 minimum wage it remarkably did not call for Medicare for All, which is overwhelmingly popular in the party's base. The reason is that it would be completely unacceptable to their corporate donors. What the Democratic establishment and the ruling class as a whole fear most is inadvertently igniting a social upheaval that brings to the surface all the pent-up anger at the

system. This means they will fight hard to stick with their dull, uninspiring message.

The Democrats' political weakness is fueling a left insurgency within the party. How far this develops remains to be seen, but the possibility exists of a "Tea Party of the left" type-development in Congress if some of the Berniecrat insurgents are elected in the 2018. At the going rate, the Democrats have a real opportunity to win back control of the House, if only because Trump will weigh like a millstone around the necks of the Republicans.

But even with a further development of the struggle within the Democratic Party what is almost certainly ruled out is transforming it into a People's Party as hundreds of thousands fervently wish. A party representing the 99% would have to refuse all corporate donations, have a progressive platform that its public representatives were required to adhere to, and real, accountable democratic structures. The establishment wing of the Democrats will resist all these things to the death and, despite the deep crisis of legitimacy they face, they still hold the levers of power within the party. One way or another, what is posed is the necessity of a new party as those calling to "Draft Bernie" (see page 2) have recognized.

The real question is when the mass movement on the streets will be reignited. The millions who came out in early 2017 have not been defeated or generally demoralized, and they are certainly angrier than ever. There is however a serious lack of leadership and a real questioning about the way forward. This shows why the growing socialist left in the U.S. has a critical role to play in articulating a strategy to unite all those targeted by Trump around a bold working class program, including using a range of tactics like mass occupations and political strike action to put the right firmly on the defensive. The defeat of Trumpcare is the signal that the right wing can be beaten. Now we must step up the fight. ☛

How Seattle Voted to Tax the Rich

Adam Ziemkowski

Seattle further cemented its reputation as one of the most progressive cities in the U.S. last week, when its City Council passed a law to tax the rich, sponsored by socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant along with Councilmember Lisa Herbold. The law places a 2.25% tax on individual incomes over \$250,000 and \$500,000 for married couples. It's expected to raise as much as \$175 million to fund affordable housing, education, transit, human services, and other critical needs.



Socialist Alternative members after the vote in Seattle City Council.

Recognizing the significance of Seattle's new tax on the rich, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, "a number of cities have adopted local income taxes, but no other city has solely targeted high earners and few have adopted so high a tax rate. The measure has opened the door to political warfare in the state."

The City Council unanimously passed the tax on the rich and a chorus of Democratic establishment politicians sung its praises. Yet, these are many of the same establishment politicians who voted against Sawant's City Council proposal to fund transit through a progressive tax on business.

Those of us in the movement should be crystal clear on how this came about. We didn't win this because Seattle's Democratic Party establishment suddenly began to care about the crushing impact that decades of budget cuts and regressive taxes have had on working people and people of color in our city. It was the growing strength of our social movements that led to this major victory.

The establishment may have ultimately voted "yes," but not because they genuinely support taxing the rich. Mayor Murray and establishment Councilmembers like Tim Burgess and Lorena Gonzalez voted for it because we built a powerful movement over a number of years which made their continued opposition politically unviable. During our

election campaigns in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, Socialist Alternative members spoke with hundreds of thousands of voters at the door and on the phone, with the bold and unambiguous demand to "tax the rich."

Seattle City Council, Sawant worked with activists from the Transit Riders Union on the proposal to remove a regressive sales tax and instead fund Seattle's Metro bus system with a tax on business and a commercial parking fee increase. We lost that vote, but over the past months the Transit Riders Union, led by Katie Wilson, spearheaded the Trump Proof Seattle coalition along with the Economic Opportunity Institute, led by John Burbank. The Trump Proof Seattle coalition, of which Socialist Alternative and Kshama Sawant were a part, played the leading role in this year's fight to win Seattle's tax on the rich.

Our movement brought together transit and neighborhood advocates, climate justice and affordable housing activists, socialists, retirees, teachers, and unions into a coalition. It met regularly to discuss and decide on the legislation and build a campaign to win it. The coalition organized Town Halls in each district, dragging along Councilmembers and forcing them to take a position with the community watching.

Critically, even as our movement picked up steam and corporate

politicians started hopping on the tax-the-rich bandwagon, we resisted the siren song of an "easier path" to victory through collaboration with the establishment, rather than class struggle. Our movement maintained an unrelenting political independence and our activist base stubbornly refused to take establishment politicians at their word. Coalition members flooded City Council offices with emails and phone calls and packed City Hall for every discussion and vote, to demand Councilmembers' support and to warn them not to oppose or water down the legislation. This approach effectively beat back the conservative wing of the Council, which scandalously put out a push poll to test the viability of replacing the tax-the-rich ordinance with a highly regressive "flat tax" proposal.

In Seattle, the tax-the-rich fight is far from over. The right wing Freedom Foundation has already filed a lawsuit saying the tax violates a Washington state law barring cities from taxing net income. The courts are subject to the power and pressures of social movements, as shown over and over in U.S. history, and recently with the victory on marriage equality in the Supreme Court. Without a doubt, our movement in Seattle is ready to take our fight into the courthouses as well as back onto the streets. ✪



Demanding Rent Control, Socialists Launch "Affordable Seattle"

Independent Candidates Strong Showing in Primaries

Advocates for affordable housing in Seattle are building momentum to build more public housing and win rent control. In the August 1 primaries, independent candidates Jon Grant and Nikkita Oliver – who were the only two candidates who supported these demands – had strong showings. Nikkita looks to be in third in the mayoral race, narrowly missing making it to the general election, and Jon Grant's second place finish for city council position 8 will see him through to the general.

Just two days previous, more than 250 local residents packed Seattle's Washington Hall to mark the official launch of Affordable Seattle. Campaign volunteers already put in over 1,000 hours of door knocking in support of Grant and Oliver over the previous six weeks. Socialist Alternative and City Councilmember Kshama Sawant initiated Affordable Seattle.

Working people in Seattle are currently facing a crisis of affordability. Rents have risen 57% in the past six years, and housing has gotten so expensive that a person working minimum wage would have to work 87 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom apartment. Working class communities across the city, especially communities that are home to people of color like the city's historically black Central District, are seeing their residents forced to move as for-profit developers invest millions of dollars into gentrifying neighborhoods and raising rents.

Affordable Seattle is bringing working people from across Seattle together to organize and fight around three bold demands:

1. A vast expansion in the city's publicly-owned affordable housing, funded by a tax on big business.
2. Requiring a full 25% of new private housing units built in the city to be affordable, and organizing a movement to overturn the ban on rent control.
3. Making landlords pay for economic evictions.

During June and July, volunteers with Affordable Seattle knocked on thousands of doors across Central and South Seattle and spoke to tenants at risk of displacement – gathering thousands of petition signatures supporting the three demands.

A key part of this strategy was supporting Nikkita Oliver for Mayor and Jon Grant for City Council, who ran independent campaigns with no corporate money.

The strong showing of both candidates in the recent primaries and the results of Affordable Seattle's conversations at the doors show that affordable housing is the key issue in Seattle and that thousands do not trust corporate status quo politicians to solve the problems. In the fall, Socialist Alternative and Affordable Seattle look to continue to campaign for investment in affordable housing, rent control, and relocation assistance. Building on the success of Kshama Sawant in demonstrating the viability of candidates who shun the Democratic Party machine and run as independents, Jon Grant's campaign will be a crucial part of this fight. ✪

Minneapolis Establishment On the Ropes:

Time to Build an Political Alternative!

Chris Gray

In 2013, Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges was elected along with a whole slate of city council members with a bold mandate to address Minneapolis' worst in the country racial and economic inequalities. What progress has been achieved like becoming the first midwest city to pass a \$15 minimum wage has been the result of relentless organizing from below. With election day three months away and massive frustration at politics as usual in City Hall, the growing momentum behind Ginger Jentzen's independent socialist campaign shows we can build an alternative.

A Crisis in City Hall

The most recent crisis started with another senseless murder at the hands of a totally out of control and unaccountable Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). A year and a half after the killing of Jamar Clark and the eviction of the 4th-Precinct occupation, and with the acquittal of Philando Castile's killer fresh on everyone's mind, Justine Damond from Australia lay dead in South Minneapolis after calling 911. The body cameras were turned off. Chief Janeé Harteau initially tried to explain away the incident as the rogue actions of an individual officer, only to abruptly resign hours later. Now there are growing calls for Mayor Hodges to resign as well.

There is a risk that campaign politics could eclipse the need for real reform. Hodges' decision to sacrifice Chief Harteau now and not earlier—despite well-documented tensions between City Hall and the MPD—seems motivated by the desire to avoid international media scrutiny in an election year.

One of the loudest critics of Mayor Hodges is Council Member Jacob Frey, a mayoral candidate as well. There is little reason to believe he offers a real alternative. Just a few weeks ago, Frey was exposed for accepting campaign donations from the police union headed by Bob Kroll, an infamous figure who compared Black Lives Matter to a terrorist organization.

The City Council and Mayor Hodges should step back and hand over the process to a democratically elected civilian committee with real powers to conduct



an independent, transparent investigation into the MPD, starting with selecting new department leadership. Real resources should also be put into building mass community meetings across the city where people can play an active role in a top to bottom restructuring of policing in Minneapolis, including addressing the militarization of the police, how officers are trained, hiring and firing policy, department priorities, and budgets.

\$15 Victory

At the end of July, Minneapolis became the first Midwestern city to enact a \$15 an hour minimum wage. The proposal will benefit 71,000 workers, overwhelmingly women and workers of color. Winning \$15 in Minneapolis shows another way cities can push back against Trump's corporate-backed agenda. Mayor Hodges and most in City Council, however, resisted \$15 up until a constant movement from below forced them to act.

Where sitting councillors stood on the \$15 minimum wage, alongside other demands for racial equity reforms, has emerged as a central dividing line in the hotly contested 2017 city council races. big-business-backed Democrats in City Hall faced growing pressure from insurgent Berniecrat challengers, fueling record turnout in the Democratic Party caucuses this spring.

Ray Dehn, a relative outsider to local politics, won the most votes at the Democratic Party (DFL) convention for the mayoral election. Like Ginger Jentzen, Dehn is endorsed by the Minnesota Nurses Association, Communications Workers of America, and Our Revolution Twin Cities. Current Mayor Betsy Hodges came in last place among viable candidates, while current Ward 3 City Council Member Jacob Frey came in second, though he has

raised the most money by far. Nekima Levy-Pounds, a leader of the local Minneapolis NAACP chapter and prominent in the BLM movement, is also running for mayor. She did not seek the DFL endorsement, but she is not explicitly running as an independent. Unlike the other mayoral candidates, Nekima has used her campaign to organize rallies and protests.

We Can Build an Alternative

Ginger Jentzen's independent socialist Ward 3 City Council campaign stands out. Using her campaign to escalate the pressure for \$15 inside City Hall, the Socialist Alternative member and former Executive Director of 15 Now is offering voters a taste of what a socialist organizer elected to City Hall could accomplish. Much like Kshama Sawant's successful socialist campaigns for Seattle City Council, Jentzen's campaign is having a city-wide impact by acting as a platform to amplify working class struggles.

We have the potential to build something new. Bernie's call for a political revolution against the billionaire class produced a deep echo in Minneapolis, though few in City Hall supported him. The fact that so many left-insurgent candidates are running viable campaigns against incumbents is a step forward.

However, we urge more candidates to join Ginger Jentzen and Kshama Sawant in refusing to take a penny from the corporate executives and big business lobbyists who typically dominate Democratic Party politics. We urge others to make a clean break with the DFL, and base their program on unapologetic demands that speak to the real needs of working-class people. In Minneapolis, this includes taxing the rich to fund affordable housing, rent control, and ending all policies that resemble "stop and frisk" in the MPD by creating an elected review board with full powers over the Minneapolis Police Department including budgets and department priorities. ✪



Vote Ginger

Campaign Gains Momentum

Eva Metz



With months remaining until election day on November, the Socialist Alternative-backed campaign to elect Ginger Jentzen has already inspired over 1,000 grassroots donations, totaling over \$60,000. That's the most of any city council campaign that doesn't take money from big business or developers, and three times as much as Ginger's Democratic Party (DFL) opponent for Minneapolis City Council Ward 3!

But corporate cash is poisoning the Minneapolis elections. A record \$1.3 million has already poured into mayoral race, much of it from big business interests. And we know this is just the beginning. Any day now, big business and wealthy developers will turn their efforts towards preventing Ginger and the forces that won \$15 in Minneapolis – a transfer of \$140 million/year from the corporate class to working people – from gaining a seat on the City Council.

While big business is buying its candidates, Berners have chosen theirs – Ginger is endorsed by unions that supported Bernie like the Minnesota Nurses Association and the Communication Workers of America, and organizations like Our Revolution Twin Cities and the Democratic Socialists of America. Bernie showed how a campaign can be financed by the people, not the billionaires. Kshama Sawant proved in Seattle that we can run a bold independent campaign and win at the city level. Now, Ginger's campaign can show that what's happened in Seattle is not unique, but a model that can be replicated across the country.

It will be crucial to winning as a local independent campaign to inspire young voters at the University of Minnesota who overwhelmingly supported Bernie's call for a political revolution. In addition to knocking on thousands of doors across the ward, the Vote Ginger campaign will launch a major outreach initiative on the University of Minnesota campus. This will include town hall meetings to organize around key issues like affordable housing, climate change, and building movements to resist Trump's racist, sexist, xenophobic, anti-worker agenda.

A majority of millennials reject capitalism, and in a UCLA survey last fall, 1 in 10 incoming freshmen said they expect to participate in protests – the highest in the 50 years they've administered the survey. In Minneapolis, and across the country, there's outrage against corporate politics-as-usual. By electing another unapologetic socialist to City Council, we can demonstrate the possibility of building an entirely new fighting, working class political alternative, a new party of the 99%. ✪

We can make history. Please consider chipping in to Vote Ginger Jentzen to build the political revolution: www.gingerjentzen.org/donate

How Can We Win S

Bryan Koulouris

In early 2016, an Oxfam study showed that just 62 people owned as much wealth as half the world's population – a truly staggering figure. Now, less than two years later, global economic inequality has since skyrocketed to the point where only six billionaires own more than the poorest 3.75 billion people. The capitalist media say the economy has been in recovery for nearly a decade, yet the social conditions facing working people get worse and worse.

Meanwhile, capitalism's thirst for short-term profits at any cost continues to deepen the environmental crisis worldwide. We need renewable energy and mass transit more than ever, and millions of unemployed and underemployed people want steady work. Yet this sick system doesn't prioritize our needs. Capitalism continues to pollute and global unemployment remains high while the planet burns. And now there is a buffoon in the White House who denies climate change is even happening!

The rise of Donald Trump is the logical culmination of capitalism in its most predatory phase. The opening for Trump's brand of racist, right-wing populism was created by an out-of-touch political establishment and a system that has massive inequality, women's oppression, institutional racism, and environmental crisis built into its very foundations. We need to challenge the Trump agenda with a movement built from below against all of his attacks, while also fighting for a society based on human needs and solidarity, rather than exploitation and corporate domination.

Young people are angry about the future capitalism offers: dead-end jobs, debt, discrimination and environmental destruction. Bernie Sanders' call for a "political revolution against the billionaire class" in 2016 helped to ignite growing interest in socialist ideas, especially among young people. Polls show that a majority of people under 30 now prefer "socialism" to "capitalism." To end this rotten system and build a new one, however, we need to get organized.

Since Trump's election, many young people are radicalizing and feel the urgent need to "do something." Socialist Alternative has grown rapidly over the past year, and the Democratic Socialists of America have gone from 8,000 to 25,000 members. Socialist newspapers, magazines and books have seen their readership expand dramatically, along with the debate about how to win fundamental change.

Capitalism and the Working Class

We need to understand how capitalism works in order to fight against it.

Capitalism is rooted in the exploitation of the working class. Working people produce all of society's vast wealth, but we only receive a small part of that in our wages. Meanwhile the employers, especially the top executives and capitalists, extract the lion's share of the fruits of our labor, fueling massive inequality and social crisis.

Competition under capitalism forces corporations to ruthlessly maximize profits, putting big business at fundamental odds with the interests of working people and the environment. Corporations look to offload every possible cost on our backs, because every dollar spent on wages, health care benefits, workplace safety, or environmental protection, is one less dollar for their profits.

The corporate-dominated media wants us to believe that we're all "middle class" now and that the "working class" is a narrow and dated idea. As socialists, however, we would say that the working class is made up of the vast majority of people. All people who have to go to work in order to live, from a well-paid engineer to a low-paid dishwasher, are all part of the working class that capitalism exploits.

Socialists see the global working class, which is increasingly female-majority and multi-racial, as the key force to change the world. We build everything; we make everything; we transport everything; we provide all the services, teach all the kids, operate all the cash registers, clean all the floors, fix the computers, tend the sick, and cook and serve the food. We do everything that makes this system run, and if we're sufficiently well organized, we can force the employers to make concessions by mobilizing ourselves as an independent political force and shutting down key areas of the economy. Ultimately, we can use this power to end this bankrupt system once and for all, and to fundamentally transform society.

Youth and Internationalism

This is the first generation in the United States since the 1930s that will have lower living standards than their parents. Young people are often the "detonators" of explosive wider struggles of working people. Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter and the Sanders campaign were all driven by youth, and this trend will continue. Capitalism has promised a



future it can't provide, and now a recent survey has shown that a majority of young people in Europe say they would participate in an "uprising" against the system. From the "Arab Spring" to the Spanish "indignados" movement to Jeremy Corbyn's powerful election campaign in Britain last year, the youth revolt is an international phenomenon.

Capitalism is a system that reaches every corner of the globe. Big corporations search for markets worldwide while pitting different sections of workers against another and cutting every possible corner to extract cheap materials and labor. Each company wants to out-exploit their competitors, and the ruling classes of each country rival each other. This process leads not only to super-exploitation but also economic protectionism and war. Yet the capitalists are willing when necessary to put their competition aside and unite with each other in order to extinguish popular revolts against their rule. For all these reasons the socialist movement needs to be international.

Socialist Alternative stands in political solidarity with the Committee for a Workers International, which organizes against capitalism in over 45 countries and on every continent. We share experiences, our perspective for struggles today, and our historical outlook rooted in the experiences of the workers' movement. We feel it is necessary to learn the lessons of international struggles so that we can equip ourselves to defeat the right wing and the

billionaire class.

Reforms and Socialism

As Marxists, we fight for every gain that working people can win under capitalism. This can be seen in our leadership in the fight for \$15, with Socialist Alternative member and Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant leading [Seattle to become the first major city to pass a \\$15 minimum wage](#). In July of this year, [we helped make Minneapolis](#) the first Midwest city to pass \$15, this time under the leadership of socialist City Council candidate [Ginger Jentzen](#). And in July, Sawant and Seattle Socialist Alternative helped bring about another nationally important victory, this time passing a local measure to [tax the rich](#) to help fund affordable housing, education and other vital services.

But as Kshama herself has [pointed out](#): "There are limits to reforming a system that is dominated by these massive and rapacious corporations. On the basis of capitalism, victories like raising the minimum wage are only temporary. Big business has many tools to make us pay for the crisis of their system."

After World War II, in an era of reconstruction and huge economic growth, and under the enormous pressures of mass socialist and communist parties and radical labor struggles, important gains for working people were won in most Western countries. But the tenuous



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economic landscape of today is radically different, with capitalism incapable of enjoying a sustained upswing, relentlessly attacking unions and working conditions, and demanding deep cuts to social services in order to just maintain profitability and survive.

Health care is one of many concrete issues that point toward a socialist solution. After enduring months of Republican threats to Medicaid—which now covers 1 in 5 people—ordinary Americans are increasingly coming to the conclusion that everyone should have health care as a right. The international experience shows that socialized medicine operates both more efficiently and provides far better health outcomes, with the U.S. system scoring consistently on the bottom rungs in study after study.

This is not because of U.S. nurses or doctors, who provide a high level of care, but because of the dysfunction and inefficiency of the broken, for-profit American system. This points to the need for a single-payer, Medicare-for-All alternative, which means putting the private insurance systems out of business altogether. We strongly support this. But as socialists we would go further, and call for bringing the hospital and pharmaceutical industries into democratic public ownership as well in order to end the subordination of human health and lives to profit.

But bringing the multi-trillion-dollar health care sector into public ownership will require a massive, determined movement of working people.

We face a deepening crisis of global climate change. Addressing it will require that we bring the massive, polluting energy industry into democratic public ownership as well and retool it for renewable energy. Because we can't control what we don't own. This also goes for the big banks, the airlines and other key sections of the economy. Bringing the top 500 corporations into democratic public ownership would represent a decisive step toward a socialist system where society can collectively decide how to allocate resources for human need.

As Rosa Luxemburg explained in 1900 in her [pamphlet](#), *Reform or Revolution*, these two choices are not just “different roads” to the same destination. To be successful, demanding reform cannot be an end unto itself – serious reforms only come about as a by-product of serious social struggle. The capitalist class needs to be genuinely fearful of a wider revolt before it will grant major concessions like Medicare for All or a federal \$15 minimum

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A Marxist Approach to Fighting Oppression

Kailyn Nicholson

Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia – if we take a broad view of the history and diversity of human societies, it's obvious these forms of oppression are not inherent to all times and places. They arise and flourish under certain conditions, but not others.

We know that women's oppression, for example, first emerged along with the rise of the earliest class societies when the development of agriculture allowed our ancestors to use their labor to begin reliably producing a surplus of food beyond immediate subsistence. The concept of private property was developed to determine who got to control this surplus, and controlling women's reproduction became necessary to regulate the inheritance of private property.

Systemic racism emerged later, as the shift from feudalism to capitalism created a competition for cheap labor and resources among European states that led to the imperialist conquest of the entire globe.

A Materialist Outlook

Marxists are sometimes accused of not caring enough about racism and sexism and reducing everything to class or economic issues in a way that ignores the importance of fighting all forms of oppression.

There is no doubt that not all socialists have treated the struggle against oppression with the seriousness it deserves, but as Marxists we see the struggle against racism and sexism as central to the liberation of the working class as a whole. We believe liberating humanity from racism and sexism requires understanding the economic roots of oppression and creating a strategy for uniting the differently-oppressed layers of the working class in struggle to end class society and with it, the material basis for oppression. We also believe that the main way consciousness changes is through common struggle.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a whole generation internationally where Marxist ideas had far less influence than before. The materialist understanding of society and oppression was undermined and replaced in most academic and left circles by post-modernism, an idealist rather than materialist worldview which holds that humans are



incapable of discovering any objective truth about our world, but are limited to purely subjective impressions.

This outlook is inherently individualistic because it asserts that the subjective experience of each individual is an equally valid conception of reality, and that no one can understand anything they haven't personally experienced. This leads to the progressive sub-dividing of people into smaller and smaller groups based on common experiences or identities rather than seeking a common basis for all the oppressed who struggle.

But Marxists argue it is objectively true that it is in the material interest of every member of the working class – regardless of race, gender, or other identity – to unite in struggle and seize the wealth and means of production away from the capitalists and create the society of universal prosperity we know is technologically possible.

How the Bosses Use Racism and Sexism

Sexism and racism are consciously used by the capitalist class to divide workers and hyper-exploit women and people of color. While better paid jobs have been historically dominated by white men, racism and sexism can also effectively drive down the

wages of the majority of white male workers. For example, racial division in the South has been a key tool used to keep out unions in general, making overall wage levels there much lower than the rest of the country.

In unionized workplaces, where workers fight for their interests in a united way, the gender and racial wage gaps are a fraction of what they are in the rest of the workforce. And countries with lower gender and racial wage gaps have higher wages for all workers.

A divided working class is unable to struggle effectively against those who own and control the wealth and resources of our society. The labor movement and all progressive forces must fight back against each and every act of injustice and bigotry and support the struggles of all oppressed groups.

The fact that we recognize that the capitalist class is the force behind all forms of oppression doesn't mean we let working class people off the hook when they act as tools of that oppression.

We also have to win members of our class to the understanding that treating oppressed identity groups as unwanted competition for scarce jobs, food, housing, healthcare, education, etc. is a losing strategy. If any of us want a better world we need to see each other not just as equals, but as necessary allies in the fight against our common exploiters: the billionaire class. ☺

Trump Pivots to Attack Trans Rights

Emerson Johnson

On July 26, President Donald Trump released a series of tweets announcing his intention to ban transgender people from serving in the military. He claimed that trans people should not be allowed to serve on the basis that the armed forces “cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption.” This latest bigoted attack is a clear effort by an administration in crisis to rally support from its right wing base.

The timing of the announcement is no accident. Trump seeks to use the trans military ban to divert attention from the recent failure of Trumpcare. After the GOP’s inability to make good on its central promise to repeal Obamacare, Trump is seeking to shore up his support with his right wing base. According to Gallup, [Trump’s approval rating is continuing to plummet and is currently at 39%](#). Despite voicing some opposition to “Bathroom Bills” during his presidential campaign, Trump is now clearly backtracking on trans rights. Throughout



Trump’s presidential campaign and time in office we have seen a series of vicious attacks on working class and marginalized communities.

Trump points to the cost of health care as the prime reason why trans people should be banned from serving in the military. According to a report commissioned by the defense department, [the military would be spending at most \\$8.4 million annually on trans-related health care](#). In comparison, this

year the military has allocated approximately [\\$4.5 billion of the budget for drones](#). For a fraction of this price the military could pay for the health care of all its trans members. Clearly, cost is not the real issue.

As socialists we completely oppose this violation of trans rights. It is a direct attack on the victories of the past 15 years that LGBTQ people and activists have struggled for and won, with the repeal of the

Defense of Marriage Act and Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell in the military. We must seriously organize to protect and extend the rights of the LGBTQ community and all marginalized people. It is not enough to idly wait for the courts to challenge this ban, and instead we must stand in solidarity with trans people and organize rallies and marches to make our opposition heard.

Under capitalism, many working class and marginalized people enlist in the military in order to gain access to higher education, affordable housing, and health care. As socialists, we oppose the violent agenda of U.S. imperialism, but defend the rights of all people serving in the military. Trans people are disproportionately affected by the crisis of capitalism, [with 1 in 5 experiencing homelessness at some point in their life](#) and [an unemployment rate of 15%, which is three times higher](#) than the general population. Within these conditions, the military beckons as a way out for many trans people seeking steady employment and is currently the largest employer of [trans](#)

[people nationally](#).

Trans people should not have to serve in the armed forces just in order to get a job, healthcare, and a place to live. Everyone deserves to get their basic needs met, regardless of who they work for.

The fight for trans rights does not end with pride marches or with purely defensive struggles against Trump and the right wing. This is an ongoing battle that we must continue to wage against the capitalist system which works to exploit and dehumanize all working class and oppressed people. We must use our power to demand the reversal of this archaic ban, and to fight for positive gains for trans people like free and accessible hormone therapy, and real solutions to LGBTQ homelessness. As we organize to defend trans rights and defeat the capitalist pro-war agenda, we must also fight for universal health care, affordable housing, and free college tuition so that we can eliminate the economic pressures to enlist and thereby improve the quality of life of all working class and oppressed people. ☘

Disabled Activists Spearhead Trumpcare Resistance

Grace Fors

Despite all the attacks we have witnessed in recent months from the Trump administration, many felt blindsided by the latest advances in the GOP’s assault on health care. Despite countless setbacks, the GOP remained dead set on looting critical tax-funded programs to finance tax cuts for the wealthy.

The Trumpcare health care bill posed vicious attacks on working people, most notably through cuts to Medicaid funding which would only serve to line the pockets of the ruling class. Leading Democrats initially failed to take the bill seriously, breaking into song when it passed the House despite threats that 22 million people would lose crucial coverage. Cuts to Medicaid would have a devastating effect on adults with disabilities. In addition to covering one-fifth of the country and a third of all adults with disabilities, Medicaid funds the community-based supports that provide an alternative to the

antiquated practice of housing the disabled in institutions.

Facing the wrath of these cuts, the disability rights community did not miss a beat in building a fightback against Trumpcare. The grassroots disability rights organization ADAPT played a key role in transforming the struggle against Trumpcare over the past few months. Their first major sit-in directly followed the announcement of Trumpcare.

In March, activists gathered in the Capitol Rotunda, demanding to be heard. In June, following the passage of the bill in the House, they made headlines by occupying Mitch McConnell’s office. Photos of Capitol police dragging protesters galvanized thousands of activists across the country to join on July 6 in a day of action with 36 events in 24 states. The momentum continued even after the defeat of Trumpcare! With the threat of an all out repeal of the Affordable Care Act with no replacement, ADAPT declared an indefinite sit-in inside the Hart atrium. Now with the failure of “skinny” repeal, we applaud their

trailblazing activism.

ADAPT’s reputation for putting their bodies on the line did not begin with the current health care debate. Starting in 1978, ADAPT’s early demonstrations for accessible transportation involved activists blocking city buses with their wheelchairs. The 1990 “Capitol Crawl” was named for the protesters who abandoned their mobility devices and crawled up the Capitol steps to pressure the House to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act. This summer marks another historical reminder of the power the disabled community wields to coordinate actions that focus public attention on the lives at stake.

One in five adults has a disability and millions are subjected to the inhumane wrath of capitalism. At the extreme end, this can take the form of sheltered workshops that pay subminimum wages – as low as 25¢ per hour – to institutions that deny basic freedoms and where the drive to cut costs results in abuse and neglect. Our poor communities and our prisons are full of disabled people

who are denied basic rights by a system that devalues them. Even after reform movements are fought and won, the community remains locked in political struggle with threats against their lives.

As socialists, we say now is the time to urgently demand an expanded and improved Medicare for All and we must continue to fight alongside the disabled community for needed reforms. ADAPT has put forward their own legislation in Congress: in May, under pressure from ADAPT and their allies, Senator Schumer introduced the Disability Integration Act. This legislation attacks the institutional biases that plague the current system and invests in community-based solutions and personal care jobs. Going beyond reforms, we need to build a society that does not place value on human lives according to what profits the capitalist class can squeeze out of them. We need a society that is truly democratic, organized on a socialist basis, in order to meet the needs of all of humanity, regardless of ability. ☘

International Summer School A Massive Success!

Socialists Unify in Barcelona

Adapted from report on SocialistWorld.net

In July, over 400 revolutionary socialists from 31 countries attended a week-long Committee for a Workers International (CWI) summer school immediately followed by the historic unification conference of the CWI and Izquierda Revolucionaria (IR). This international joining of forces and cooperation strengthens the worldwide struggle for socialism and working-class movements and was greeted with great excitement.

The school opened with a plenary discussion on the situation in Europe which introduced themes that were central to all discussions during the week. These included the unresolved and structural nature of capitalism's ongoing crisis, the rise of new mass left formations in a number of key countries, as well as the importance of principled socialist leadership both in the struggle in communities and workplaces against austerity and in offering a Marxist alternative to reformist leaderships in mass movements of workers and youth.

The school heard examples of how the CWI and IR in Britain, Spain, Germany, Brazil, France and elsewhere, approached the mass movements around new left parties and leaders, from Jeremy Corbyn to PSOL (Party of Socialism and Liberty – Brazil). Our unique approach – of positive engagement to build these movements into powerful mass parties of the working class, combined with an honest criticism of the limits of reformism and defence of a socialist, internationalist program – has allowed our forces to become increasingly significant factors within and around these developments.

Comrades from South Africa, Greece, and other countries explained how, even in the absence of such mass forces at this stage, Marxists can play a leading role in attempts to gather



Over 400 attended the week long summer school in Barcelona.

the forces from the ranks of the movement for the building of mass political alternatives which can undergo rapid growth and development.

Building a Revolutionary Leadership for Victories

The school took place in the immediate aftermath of the acquittal of the Jobstown defendants in Ireland, including Paul Murphy and two other Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland) members. This campaign, in which the CWI mobilized support internationally, pushed back the attempt of the Irish capitalists to criminalize protest. This marked the latest phase in the mass struggle against the water charges in Ireland which were an austerity measure imposed by the European Union, European Central Bank and IMF. The Socialist Party helped lead the mass boycott that led to the charges being scrapped. This victory underlines the importance of steadfast principled socialist leadership for the waging of successful class battles.

Just before the school, Minneapolis became the latest major city in the U.S. to win \$15, spearheaded by Socialist Alternative, including Ginger Jentzen, SA member running for City Council this November (see p. 5). Along with our Irish comrades' example, Socialist Alternative in the U.S. shows how to use elected positions in

capitalist institutions: not to subordinate or sell out the struggle on the streets and in workplaces, but to magnify and strengthen struggles.

The leadership provided by Izquierda Revolucionaria members in the Sindicato de Estudiantes (students' union) in Spain – through repeated mass mobilisations and general strikes – was also fundamental to the recent defeat of the right wing Partido Popular government's high-stakes testing called "revalidation exams."

Compare these victories and principled mass struggles with the shameful policy of demobilization and class collaboration implemented by the majority of the world's major trade union leaders.

The energy, confidence and enthusiasm which has reverberated throughout the ranks of the CWI as a result of these victories, and of the historic unification of our forces with Izquierda Revolucionaria in Spain, Mexico, and Venezuela, set the tone for this unforgettable school.

During the course of the school, which took place outside Barcelona, the CWI and IR took the bold initiative of holding a public rally in the center of Barcelona to celebrate the centenary of the 1917 Russian October socialist revolution. Over 600 people attended the event in the searing July heat to hear Ana Garcia, Paul Murphy, Juan Ignacio Ramos, Peter Taaffe, and Kshama Sawant. A separate

report of the rally can be seen here.

Strengthening Our Forces for the Future

The participation of comrades from IR enriched the course of the whole school, with key contributions on Europe, the national question, trade union and youth work, and the rise of new left formations, among many others.

The special unification congress on the last day of the school was organized with delegates elected from the democratic bodies of the CWI and IR national sections. The congress voted on a document outlining the political basis for the unification, and elected leading members of IR onto the CWI's International Executive Committee.

The unification congress was opened and closed by Peter Taaffe and Juan Ignacio Ramos, leading members from the two organizations. Comrades young and old, from the Spanish state, Mexico, Venezuela, Britain, Germany, Greece, Belgium, and the U.S. spoke in a joyful but serious meeting. This congress was not one of sentimentality but one of strength and confidence for the future. It represents a qualitative strengthening of the CWI and its ability to intervene and influence events in the next period.

It is a unification brought about by the capitalist crisis, which has tested all revolutionary tendencies, and the revolutionary winds which are blowing around the world. Amid the crises, splits, and pessimism which is the lot of others on the left in this period. This principled and enthusiastic unification of our forces will be noticed by workers, youth, and revolutionaries around the world searching for a powerful socialist alternative. We invite them all to contact, discuss, and fight with us for the building of a mass world party of socialist revolution. ✪



Important Analysis from Around the World

Read more about the international workers' movement from participants – follow SocialistWorld.net for updates from the Committee for a Workers International of which Socialist Alternative is in political solidarity.

Venezuela: Imperialist Offensive Sharpens Following Assembly Elections

The corporate media calls Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro a dictator but what is really going on in Venezuela? This important analysis following the election of a constituent assembly to write a new constitution comes from socialists active in Venezuela who oppose the agenda of the bosses who are preparing the ground for a coup. They explain that the only way to defend the gains of the revolution is to decisively break with capitalism, a course which the bureaucratic regime has opposed at every stage.

Israel/Palestine: Ten Days that Shook the Occupation

Palestinian workers occupied parts of old Jerusalem as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu imposed new security measures at checkpoints. Correctly seeing this provocation as a further attempt to assert control over Palestinian controlled Jerusalem, after 10 days of demonstrations, occupations, and police violence, the Israeli government backed down and removed the metal detectors and cameras. This points toward a new phase of struggle in Israel/Palestine.

Sweden: Outsourcing Behind Political Crisis

Sweden is sometimes pointed to as an example of "Northern European socialism." A recent scandal over privatizing the State Transportation Agency ended with the firing of two government ministers. The current Social Democratic-Green government has embarked on a program of austerity while the "Alliance" of traditional capitalist parties oppose policies only because they want to go further in attacking the working class. Read about how socialists in Sweden are fighting the austerity agenda. ✪

Union Organizing at Delta Airlines

Leon Pinsky

Ramp workers at Delta Airlines are organizing to get a union under the guidance of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) union.

Last year Delta recorded a profit of \$4.4 billion, almost \$2 billion more than its competitors, and have made \$866 million from baggage fees while baggage handlers' salaries have remained stagnant. At the same time unionized workers, such as the pilots, have seen pay rises.

Socialist Alternative has assisted in reaching out to workers at LaGuardia airport in New York City. We've met with one of the leading organizers, who asked to remain anonymous.

Socialist Alternative (SA): Why are you seeking to form a union?

Cliff: I've been working as a ramp worker for twenty-five years and have seen the quality of the job deteriorate. We lost a lot in job security and retirement benefits. I lost my pension. But the main reason is that the management makes rules for their benefit. I'd like a contract where both sides are held accountable. Junior workers don't have the same career opportunities as when I started.

SA: What are the major obstacles in winning a union?

C: 15,000 workers spread all across North America is a challenge to organize all at the same time. Airline companies spend a lot of money on anti-union firms to make it difficult to organize. While most industries will require 30% workers approval to recognize a union, the airline industry requires 50%. Another challenge is that



Delta ramp workers pose with a union stewardess.

the company relies on fear. They pushed the false narrative that if you're pro union, you're anti-company. Delta is a good company, and I like my job, but over time I've seen many changes in the way workers are treated.

Delta is the only airline to practice a ready-reserve program which manipulates employment laws in such a way that they replace part-time workers of 25 hours a week with ready-reserve workers who work 24 hours a week, so they don't have to pay them certain benefits.

The public should know that in addition to loading mail, freight, and cargo the workers also enter weight and balance information, handle ground movement of aircraft, and perform de-icing. Because they don't get enough hours, the

ready-reserve workers need a second job, yet they're asked to perform these critical tasks by Delta. We think that they should receive the same benefits as everybody else. There shouldn't be two classes of workers.

SA: What has the union drive accomplished so far?

C: We've been organizing stations, holding rallies, and visibility events throughout the system.

We're seeing more people who are getting involved in the campaign, including support from people who have previously been opposed to having a union.

Across the country, many airport workers struggle to make ends meet while airlines are making record profits. People realize that the only response to corporate injustices is organized labor. In a blue-collar industry like this, a union is essential.

SA: Are there any plans of reaching out to other unionized workers for solidarity?

C: Yes, people have been helping from the nurses' union, Communication Workers of America, SEIU, International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative, and IAM. We do coordinated events with the Delta flight attendants who are also organizing for a union, and in Los Angeles, the American Airlines workers are helping out.

The workers have produced a newsletter, *The Pushback*, which has more information about their struggle. If you would like to help, check out dlramp.org, and Delta Workers Unite on Facebook. Get in touch with workers in your area and help build organized labor to fight back against corporate greed! ☺

Virginia Transit Workers Rebuild Their Union in Contract Battle

Ryan Timlin, ATU Local 1005 Union Rep (personal capacity)

Fighting a tense contract battle in anti-union Virginia in the era of Trump, transit workers at the Fairfax Connector bus system outside Washington, D.C. reinvigorated their Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) local 1764 and earlier this year won massive gains in a new contract. The local was in rough shape before the contract was up, with more than half of the 600 workers in the bargaining unit not members of the union.

The local voted on a strike and set a deadline. This pressure campaign, build up, and threat of a strike worked and ATU

1764 won many of its demands. The wage progression was shortened from fifteen years to five years, and most of the gaps in pay and benefits between the garages were closed. The company also agreed to increase their contribution to the 401(k) pension plan. Safety and health hazards were fixed, and better contract language on bathroom breaks was agreed. In an inspiring example of what is possible when workers wage a determined struggle, the victory has led to real growth in the local, pushing it over 85% of the workforce in Fairfax Connector.

ATU local 1764's shining victory at Fairfax Connector is a powerful example which shows that grassroots organizing

and militant unionism can defeat corporate power in non-union right to work conditions in the South. We must learn from this fight that a bold approach is necessary to defend the rights of all workers to live a dignified life and challenge the dictatorship of the bosses at the workplace. It is only through the type of tactics and strategy utilized by the union during this contract battle that we can revitalize the labor movement and win workers' confidence in the potential power of unions in the era of Trump and decaying capitalism. ☺

Read the full article at SocialistAlternative.org.

Nissan Workers Reject UAW – Setback for the Labor Movement

Joshua Koritz

August 4 – In a serious defeat, Nissan workers in Canton, Mississippi [decided against joining the United Auto Workers \(UAW\)](#). Had this drive been won, it would have echoed across the country as an important step toward rebuilding the power of the labor movement. This comes in the wake of the defeat of the International Association of Machinists organizing drive at Boeing in South Carolina earlier this year and the 2014 defeat of the UAW at Volkswagen in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Union leaders recognize that the bosses' ability to keep unions out of the South undercuts workers across the country, but they have broadly failed to convince workers in these recognition fights that they have a strategy to win real gains if they vote for the union.

Of course, the bosses' hardline anti-union tactics, on full display in Nissan, play a big role. Despite a recent NLRB ruling of unfair labor practices against Nissan, the UAW was faced with a serious disinformation campaign as well as threats by the company to close and move production and to fire any union member who went on strike. This, cumulatively seems to have had an effect.

The Canton, Mississippi plant is mostly black and the UAW made a big point of its historic pro-civil rights record. But again, without a real strategy to win economic gains this was not enough. The election also omitted 2,500 part-time or subcontracted workers, who earn half of the \$26 an hour that experienced full timers make. Therefore all organizing was among a workforce receiving a wage way above the Canton, Mississippi median. One of Nissan's weapons was pointing to the failure of the UAW to prevent job losses and wage reductions in Detroit during the recession. Especially for workers making a good wage, this point delegitimized the UAW's efforts.

To succeed going forward, the UAW needs to acknowledge that its overall strategy is deeply flawed. Only by acknowledging the defeats it has suffered can it hope to regain the trust of autoworkers. To do this it should adopt a class-struggle based approach—like the strategies that founded and built up the UAW in the 1930s. This means seeing the union as the workers in the workplace and that a union is a collective tool to fight the bosses, rather than the UAW's recent history of endlessly negotiating concessions, partnership with the bosses, and not relying on the collective power of the workforce except as a last resort. ☺

Read the full article at SocialistAlternative.org.

How Can We Win Socialist Change?

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wage.

If the struggle for reforms is not used to develop the consciousness of working people and prepare the ground for a thoroughgoing socialist transformation of society, the capitalists will look to roll back those reforms that have been won, or to destroy those working class forces that defend them. The ruling class will not hesitate to engage in economic war or even military coups against elected left governments. Left governments seeking to carry out their programs will run headlong into the brick wall of the capitalists' control and ownership of the key resources in society, as well as the brutal capitalist state apparatus.

This is what happened to the SYRIZA government in Greece in 2015, which was elected to fight savage austerity being imposed by the European Union, the European Central Bank and the IMF. Unfortunately, SYRIZA did not have a clear socialist program. Their leaders thought that they could negotiate reforms for Greece within the framework of capitalism, and convince the European ruling class to give them a better deal than previous Greek governments. The Greek working class was itself prepared to fight but SYRIZA capitulated. The lessons of this defeat must be learned by the workers and socialist movement internationally.

Building A Party of Working People

Socialist Alternative and the Committee for a Workers International consistently work to build broad parties of the working class, which often begin with the perspective of fighting for basic reforms. But we also aim to build a clear revolutionary organization that can participate within these mass parties and to patiently make the case for a full socialist program.

Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign in 2016 won the support of millions precisely because it advocated for bold reforms including Medicare for All, a \$15 minimum wage, an end to mass

incarceration, and tuition-free college. Sanders also advocated for "democratic socialism," though in reality he meant a reformed capitalism. We actively supported his campaign but explained that defeating the billionaire class and winning a society based on solidarity and human need will require a social revolution. More immediately, we urged Sanders not to accept the outcome of the rigged Democratic primary, but to keep running all the way to November. This was the way to both challenge Trump's odious right wing populism, and to launch a new party of, by, and for working people.

What About Russia?

We need to learn the lessons of past working class struggles. Many people skeptical of the viability of socialism think that the Russian Revolution led directly to authoritarian rule, and that this is an inevitable result of revolutionary change. On the 100th anniversary of this earthshaking event, however, we need to understand the real lessons of 1917, the rich history of the Bolshevik party and its democratic traditions, and how genuine socialists fought heroically against Stalin's rise to power.

Many of the gains and reforms working people won internationally during the 20th century, including the 8-hour workday, voting rights for women, free education, national health care, and a broad social safety net, came in the aftermath of the global revolutionary wave unleashed by the Russian Revolution. The Russian Revolution was thoroughly democratic with workers, soldiers, and peasant councils (called "soviets") built from below, and with all left parties represented.

The key leaders of the revolution, Lenin and Trotsky, perceived the revolution in Russia as a prelude to a European and worldwide revolution, and understood that socialism could only be based on an international and voluntary federation of socialist countries that included the most economically developed societies. They understood that capitalism

globally would fight back against the new workers' state, and that one socialist country (and particularly one as economically backward as Russia) could not survive on its own.

The tragic isolation of the Russian workers' state after numerous opportunities to spread the revolution – especially to Germany – failed to succeed, allowing the rise of Stalinism. A layer of conservative bureaucrats increasingly moved to undermine soviet democracy and to control the distribution of scarce resources, thereby enabling themselves to become privileged.

Despite the seizure of power by this privileged bureaucracy, and its rolling back of many of the progressive gains of the Russian Revolution, there are many positive lessons we can learn. One is the potential power of working people to end capitalism. Another is that it was necessary to build a cohesive and politically clear revolutionary socialist party for the movement to be successful. While any struggle against capitalism in the U.S. today will of course have huge differences from Russia of 100 years ago, studying the history of the socialist movement is crucial for any activist entering into the movement.

Seize the Time!

With the huge interest in socialist ideas and the potentially explosive movements that could emerge against Trump, the left has its biggest opportunities to grow and make an impact on U.S. politics since the 1970s.

We will work with everyone on the left to build a broad movement to defeat Trump and the billionaire class. At the same time, we see the need for international organization and struggle to successfully end capitalism. If you want to learn more about the fight for socialism and want to get involved now and win victories for working people, then you should consider [joining](#) Socialist Alternative today. ✪

Boston Save Our Community Centers Campaign Wins

Gabe Feldstein

In August 2017, it seems much more common to hear about funds moving away from libraries, schools, and community centers and toward private contractors and developers. But in West Roxbury, a neighborhood in Boston, a vital community center, the Draper Pool, is seeing its hours expanded as two union lifeguard positions will be posted.

Winning these positions took a long political campaign against the city government and mayor's office after news came down that two community centers in West Roxbury, the Draper Pool and the Ohrenberger Community Center, were seeing their funding and hours slashed. All across the city, community centers are being targeted. With the victory of this campaign in winning two union lifeguard positions, we now turn our attention to the Ohrenberger Community Center which faces closures during the morning and early afternoon hours – jeopardizing what has become a mainstay for the elderly community in West Roxbury.

As news of the cuts to the Draper Pool and the rest of the community centers in Boston began to spread, Socialist Alternative launched a campaign called, "Save Our Community Centers," with the main goal of restoring weekend hours at the Draper Pool and morning hours at the Ohrenberger.

The Save Our Community Centers campaign handed out flyers with the Mayor's hotline and a list of demands in order to directly target Mayor Marty Walsh who has the final say on how money is allocated. Despite the fact that the Mayor was gaining national popularity speaking out about the viciousness of the cuts executed by the Republicans and Donald Trump, he was calling for cuts in his own city.

After 100s of calls to the Mayor's hotline and a relentless campaign of tabling, we won an extension of the pool's hours and two union positions to staff it! Unfortunately, many community centers in Boston still face cuts, but the Ohrenberger will open with some staffing during the mornings. These reopenings, beyond just a revival of a source of employment, recreation, and community building, demonstrate a path to victory at a time when politicians across the country in even the most "progressive" cities are implementing budget cuts and closures of publicly funded spaces. Community campaigns like Save Our Community Centers connected to a socialist program of full funding for community programming is what will be necessary to defend against the cuts that are to come. ✪

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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

WE WANT YOU! FOR SOCIALIST STUDENTS



Keely Mullen

We Are in Debt, We Are Underpaid, and We See No Way Out

Our generation was born into the dying years of the American dream. We are entering the adult world trillions of dollars in debt and we see no way out via the low-wage jobs available to us once we graduate. The unemployment rate for our generation is roughly three times that of the rest of the population and we are earning 20% less than recent generations. Young people have entered a world wracked with crises that we played no role in creating

and yet we are the ones that will live with the fallout.

The system of capitalism, based entirely on the profits of billionaires, has nothing to offer our generation. It cannot guarantee us work, it cannot guarantee us health care, and it cannot guarantee us the opportunity buy a home, to have a family, or to one day retire. Rather than simply accepting that the world is filled with poverty, inequality, injustice, and oppression we are ready to fight for something new.

We Are Fighting Back

All over the world young people are fighting back. We are fighting racist police; we are fighting sexism, homophobia, and transphobia; we are fighting cuts to education; and we

are fighting the politics of billionaire bigots like Donald Trump. This fight has gone global – as seen in Britain with young people coming out in the hundreds of thousands to support Jeremy Corbyn in the recent general elections. Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party and a self-described socialist, ran on bringing key industries, such as the postal and railroad industries, back into public ownership, a higher minimum wage, and full funding for their National Health Service.

During the 2016 elections, a similar thing happened in the U.S.: more young people voted for Bernie Sanders than for Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump combined! Fully 24% of 18-30 year olds who have taken some sort political action in their life, are estimated to have come out to demonstrations after Trump's election. Young people were at the forefront of the airport occupations following Trump's "Muslim ban" and sit-ins in anticipation of the Trumpcare vote, both of which helped to deliver key defeats to Trump and the GOP's reactionary agenda.

We will need to escalate the resistance as Trump's attacks continue. We need to organize a movement that can unite all those targeted by his regime of hate and is willing to take up a variety of strategies, including protests and rallies, occupations, sit-ins, and strikes. Young people of all backgrounds will be at the forefront of this movement and young socialists also need to put forward bold strategies to help take it forward.

In order to drive Trump out of office, we need to know both what we are fighting against and what we are fighting for. We are fighting against the skyrocketing cost of education, the lack of affordable housing in major U.S. cities, and low wages that have plagued our generation. What we need to fight for includes free college for everyone in America, a \$15 an hour minimum wage, and Medicare for All! But beyond just fighting to improve life now, we are fighting against a

SocialistStudents.net



world where the profits of the few are valued over the needs of the many and for a world where ordinary people have democratic control over the key decisions that affect their lives.

We See that a Socialist World is Possible

Our generation has a more favorable view of socialism than capitalism. This demonstrates that our generation is through with accepting the evils of our current system and is eager to build something new.

Socialist Students is an organization of high school students, college students, and young workers who believe that the crisis created by global capitalism has reached a critical point. Six men now own the same wealth as half the global population, our climate is in dire decay, and we are witnessing more and more frequent economic crises. We do not believe that capitalism, a system built on the rule of corporations and the wealthy, can find a way out.

As with every previous social system in human history, capitalism will be replaced. We will fight for it to be replaced with socialism. A system wherein the people who make society run – who build the buildings, drive the trains, engineer new innovations, care for us when we are sick, and teach us when we are young – make the decisions. We envision a world where profit does not drive most life on the planet into extinction. A world organized in the most ethical, fair, and sustainable way. Join Socialist Students and help us build a socialist world. ✪

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