

*The Washington Socialist*  
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[Welcome to the first 2015 issue of the Washington Socialist](#)

Tuesday, January 13th, 2015



***Welcome to the first 2015 issue of the Washington Socialist, the email newsletter of Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America. And Happy New Year.***

As the year opens, progressive and left organizations like ours are struggling as always, and the signs are more than just the appalling carnage of the 2014 election in national and state politics. The lagging recovery, only mildly helped along by the pusillanimous one-time stimulus program, has left a widespread sour mood among those who did not benefit from the corporate and Wall Street resurgence. Good politics seldom emerge from the electorate under those circumstances, but... may offer new openings for education. We can hope the new year will offer those opportunities. And — you may have heard this before — nobody said this would be easy...

Metro DC DSA's January looks like this: Our **Jan. 10 membership meeting** will hear from Debby Szeredy of the Postal Workers, who will outline the privatization threat(s) they are fighting. The meeting is at 1 at the MLK main library, 901 G St. NW in room A9 downstairs. Szeredy, the APWU's executive vice-president, will speak first and questions follow. The membership business meeting is 2-2:30. The monthly **Socialist Salon** is the following Thursday, **Jan. 15** at 6:30 p.m.; local activists will lead a discussion of the electoral and governance prospects in the District and Maryland. It's at Hunan Dynasty, 215 Pennsylvania Ave. SE. And a **Happy Hour** is planned for 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, **Jan. 28**. Get updates on all these events — and others — on our [Meetup page](#).

#### **IN THIS ISSUE:**

[WELCOME TO 2015](#): The local deftly postponed its membership meeting Dec. 13 to participate in the march against police violence on that day. Pictures illustrate our solid turnout.

[HOLIDAY GREETINGS AND NEW YEAR THOUGHTS](#): If it sometimes seems as though every New Year brings a fresh stage of struggle that's both old and new — well, it appears to be true. Kurt Stand focuses on why that can have a clarifying effect — maybe even energizing when looked at the right way.

[YEARLY REPORT: WHAT OUR LOCAL DID IN 2014](#): We always hope that “you are what you were” is going to be a strategic advantage rather than a millstone, that our learning outpaces our routines. Andy Feeney’s comprehensive and clear-eyed view of the Metro DC DSA local’s activities during 2014 shows a surprising amount of work that took place, as well as avenues for improvement.

[CONGRESS VOTES TO BLOCK DC MARIJUANA INITIATIVE, BUT CITY VOWS TO FIGHT BACK](#): An Eastern Shore (Maryland) Republican Congressman – with a history of meddling in the District’s affairs to please the home folks – has done it again. This time Andy Harris is trying to quash the D.C. initiative on marijuana. It’s a hassle, but there are persuasive arguments that he was too late on this one. Bill Mosley reads the tea leaves: Will this be the insult that propels the Statehood movement to the next level?

[SOCIALISM AND RAPE](#): The historical sociologist Orlando Patterson found that classical Greek society – a patriarchy if there ever was one, as well as a classic slave society – had a curious definition of freedom. Essentially, maximum freedom was enjoyed by imposing one’s will on someone else. This explains a lot. Carolyn Byerly outlines the development of socialist-feminist responses to rape in recent decades and how it has cultivated the national discourse.

[SUSTAINABLE TECH ENABLERS](#): As wind energy emerges as a main renewable source, other tech wizardry enables it to be more reliable and, perhaps, to keep it from being stifled by national security panics. Dan Adkins briefs us on Sustainable Tech.

#### BOOKS/ARTS

Two movies get a look from Dan Adkins: the hockey documentary [Red Army](#) and the Hollywood version of Alan Turing, [The Imitation Game](#).

[GOOD READS FOR SOCIALISTS](#): A year-end compendium of useful reads, radical and otherwise, you may not have seen.

[DISASTER CAPITALISM AND THE DISASTER OF CAPITALISM](#): Naomi Klein’s new book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Planet* is making waves for its subtitle. In a review, Woody Woodruff says her account makes more sense taken with her 2007 book, [The](#)

[Shock Doctrine](#) – a cogent account of how today’s capitalism was reengineered by some familiar forces to become hyper and globalized, accelerating the ruin of the environment.

**You can read these and other past articles in the *Washington Socialist* on our website where they are archived, [dsadc.org](http://dsadc.org)**

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**Our readers are our best writers.** Join that group and submit an article about activism you are doing or someone else is doing; reviews of important books you have read; think-pieces contributing to the left's perennial search for a better way to explain our crisis to its victims. *You are part of this conversation. Submit contributions to The Washington Socialist at a number of levels — send us nominee for “Good Reads” (they should be available online so send links); send news and notices of activism; submit articles. Send to [woodlanham@gmail.com](mailto:woodlanham@gmail.com).*

## CONGRESS VOTES TO BLOCK DC MARIJUANA INITIATIVE, BUT CITY VOWS TO FIGHT BACK

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

### *The Washington Socialist* <> **January 2015**

*By Bill Mosley*

According to an ancient Kenyan saying, when two elephants fight it's the grass that suffers. And in the recently concluded battle over federal spending for 2015, it was an elephant fighting a donkey while, barely visible to the combatants, democracy in the District of Columbia got trampled – again.

The latest outrage against home rule was a rider in the spending bill, inserted at the behest of Rep. Andy Harris (R-Md.) to block Initiative 71, approved by 70 percent of DC voters last November, which would legalize marijuana in the District. While the debate in Congress featured salvos on banking, immigration and other national issues, few on the Hill had anything to say about congressional micromanaging of a local matter, even after DC activists staged a sit-in at the office of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. There were exceptions, such as Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), who called the rider “an offense to Americans of all states and Americans in the District of Columbia and all those who believe in our cherished ideals.” And Eleanor Holmes Norton, DC's non-voting delegate in House, protested the bill vigorously. But few votes were swayed over the DC provision, and the bill passed.

“Here we go again!” lamented Anise Jenkins, president and executive of director of the Stand Up! for Democracy in DC Coalition, which conducts educational activities in support of DC statehood. “This is the second time Rep. Andy Harris has tried to stop DC voters from deciding our own laws on marijuana. It is strange how he ‘forgets’ he is being paid to represent the people who live in his district – Maryland's Eastern Shore — not to interfere with the rights of the people of the District of Columbia! Is it time to remind him?”

By now, residents of the District are getting used to Congress interfering in local affairs, though no happier about it. After DC voters approved a measure in 1998 to allow marijuana for medical purposes, Congress blocked its implementation for 10 years. Past riders have included a ban on local funding for needle exchange programs designed to prevent the spread of HIV, which was

lifted in 2007 but not until after more than [15,000 DC residents, or 3 percent of the population, had contracted HIV – a rate as high as some West African nations](#). In 2011 President Obama acceded to a demand from Republicans to prohibit the District from funding abortions for poor women, which sparked protests that resulted in numerous DC residents, including Mayor Vincent Gray, being arrested.

Why are certain members of Congress, almost always conservative Republicans, so eager to micromanage DC affairs? First, because they can. They have no such authority over their own states or any states, but the Constitution gives Congress legislative authority over the federal district. This makes the DC budget part of the annual federal appropriations morass, even though the majority of funds at issue are raised through local taxes. Secondly, the DC laws that have come into their sights are generally measures favored by progressives. The marijuana initiative, for example, gained most traction locally as a measure for racial justice, since African Americans bear the brunt of enforcement of the drug laws although whites are about as likely to be marijuana users, according to the [DC Cannabis Campaign](#). Therefore, conservative opposition to marijuana legalization in the District not only allows politicians to posture as being tough on drugs, it also allows them to engage in a subtle form of “dog-whistle politics,” signaling to their mostly white constituencies that they’re happy to keep sending black youths to prison for minor drug infractions – all without overtly mentioning race.

The 2011 protest portended a less pliant District government, tired of four decades of watered-down “home rule” in which elected officials have been forced to govern with Congress looking over their shoulders. In 2012, voters approved a DC Council-sponsored referendum in favor of freeing the local budget from the federal appropriations process, although the Gray administration, spurred by DC Attorney General Irving Nathan’s legal objections, has been fighting the measure in court.

Then, in the wake of Congress’ interference in the marijuana initiative, the posture of DC officials increasingly turned to one of defiance. Both DC Council Chair Phil Mendelson and Delegate Norton said the District would move forward with legalization in the face of congressional opposition. Norton, for her part, said the language in the appropriations bill barring the District from using any funding to “enact” a reduction of drug laws is moot – the city had already “enacted” the laws by voting for them in November. Meanwhile, Mendelson said he would send marijuana legalization to Congress for the standard 30-day review and force members to either let it pass or proactively shoot it down, which could have the effect of further galvanizing the movement for DC statehood.

“Ignoring the will of DC voters is an obvious intrusion on Home Rule. Unfortunately, the Constitution gives Congress that power and once again they are using it in a cynical and undemocratic way,” said U.S. Sen. Michael D. Brown (D-DC). “The strategy to submit Initiative 71 to Congress should be pursued as an act of defiance but, in my opinion, it will not work. ‘Exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever’ is absolute. The only real remedy for our situation in the District of Columbia is statehood. Only by becoming a state will we ever achieve ‘real’ home rule and become equal citizens of this democracy with the right to self-determination. Year after year we get attacked through the budget process. It’s time to say enough is enough and stand up for DC statehood.” (While senators and representatives from DC

do not have votes in Congress, they act as elected lobbyists for DC statehood in their respective chambers.)

So the battle over legalized marijuana continues as only the latest front in the ongoing battle to free DC from congressional control. Given the continued penchant for congressional meddling, it's becoming clear that only DC statehood offers the full local autonomy that will cease congressional micromanagement once and for all. A statehood bill introduced by Norton in the last session of Congress gained numerous sponsors in both houses and a hearing in the Senate, but neither chamber voted on it. In the face of a more hostile Congress in the next session, DC activists and elected officials will be looking for a way to move the statehood struggle forward in 2015.

*For a historical perspective on resistance to congressional control of the District of Columbia and the growth of the DC statehood movement, see [my article in New Politics Magazine](#).*

#### [DISASTER CAPITALISM AND THE DISASTER OF CAPITALISM](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

#### ***The Washington Socialist* <> January 2015**

*By Woody Woodruff*

#### **A Review of Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Planet* (2014) and *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007)**

It's been a longtime, empirically grounded truth that when disaster strikes, those with deep resources – the haves – weather it better than the have-nots. Before unions, the only way workers could win in hard times was to die. The population crash of the fourteenth-century Black Death paradoxically began the modern era by forcing up the wages of those in the diminished work force, shrinking the area of human settlement and giving Eurasia a frontier.

Most of the time, though, it was the haves who not only survived the catastrophe better but learned that the have-nots wound up even more desperate and oppression-ready than usual.

The impending catastrophe of climate change is only the latest in which capitalism and authoritarian politics are hooking up with plans to emerge stronger after the crisis than before.

Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Planet* deals expressly with the mortal threat of climate change. But it keys perfectly with her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. That work outlined a designed sequence toward domination in the market-fundamentalist gospel of the University of Chicago's Milton Friedman and his disciples. Their quite amoral project involved imposing economic shock treatment as part of

right-wing government takeovers in Chile, Argentina, Indonesia, post-Soviet Russia, US-occupied Iraq and Afghanistan – and post-Katrina New Orleans and the post-9/11 US.

As a complete ecology of domination, though, this was coupled with shock applied to dissident individuals and groups via “disappearance,” torture and psychological coercion. Klein saw a continuity between the malleability of peoples’ behavior when they were deliberately destabilized in a psychological setting and the malleability of societies in times of crisis and instability.

The renegade Canadian psychotherapist Ewen Cameron’s 1950s experiments on destabilization of subjects, including the excessive use of then-new electroshock techniques, drew the interest of CIA interrogation specialists. It led to [the collaboration of psychotherapists](#) in Guantanamo’s horrors and the techniques used in Chile and Argentina by brutal juntas, some later trained at the US military’s infamous School of the Americas. (SD 35-7)

The complement to these techniques was provided by Milton Friedman and the Chicago Boys, always on the hunt for catastrophes that offered an opening to introduce market fundamentalism in as pure a form as they could. Klein has a caution for all here, though: “The ideologies that long for that impossible clean slate, which can be reached only through some kind of cataclysm, are the dangerous ones.” (SD 19)

Klein distinguishes, in *Shock Doctrine*, between market fundamentalism and markets per se. Under many circumstances, “A free market in consumer product can coexist with free public health care, with public schools, with a large segment of the economy – like a national oil company – held in state hands. It’s equally possible to require corporations to pay decent wages, to respect the right of workers to form unions, and for governments to tax and redistribute wealth so that the sharp inequalities that mark the corporate state are reduced. Markets need not be fundamentalist.” (SD 20)

But in the hands of the Chicago Boys, fundamentalism was the only gospel. The three-point shock doctrine was a political coup, shock therapy for a nonfundamentalist economy, and direct torture or psychological behavior modification a la Ewen Cameron. By Klein’s reading, these were natural allies and their different individual devotees spoke the same language. “The shock of the coup prepared the ground for economic shock therapy; the shock of the torture chamber terrorized anyone thinking of standing in the way of the economic shock. Out of this live laboratory emerged the first Chicago School state, and the first victory [Chile] in its global counterrevolution.” (SD 71)

Friedman and the Chicago Boys saw as their specific enemy “developmentalism,” a trend and national strategy particularly popular in the Southern Cone (South America) in the 1950s and ‘60s. Developmentalists engaged in state planning for industrial and extractive development, and nationalization was frequently on the table for the essential industries and enterprises: varying degrees of state socialism. So market fundamentalism became “counterrevolutionary” and was weaponized by US covert forces and corporate powers. “In this new era, no one besides a handful of men in uniform needed to agree with them.” (SD 78)

This three-pronged doctrine was spread by its success, the tacit or active support of US administrations, and the incentive offered to militaries throughout the Southern Cone to take care of their explicit enemies in a pattern made more famous in this century by terrorist paramilitaries. “By the mid-seventies, disappearances had become the primary tool of the Chicago School juntas throughout the Southern Cone,” with thirty thousand abductions in Argentina over the course of its military rule. As the Chicago/Shock doctrine became routinized for use in troublesome nations, Friedman formulated it succinctly: “Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.” The ideas that are “lying around” foremost in the public mind must be kept “alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.” Crises, Klein surmises, “are... democracy free zones – gaps in politics as usual when the need for consent and consensus do not seem to apply.” She believes Friedman and his cohorts took a lesson from Keynes, whose ideas were salient and ready when the Depression brought the crisis that made their implementation not only possible but inevitable. (SD 140-41)

The Chicago takeover of the IMF and World Bank in the era of the “Washington Consensus” – 1989-ca. 2000 – furthered the nonmilitary quality of disaster capitalism. The two mega-institutions were ready to provide capital under neoliberal conditions – low public services, high exports, tight budgets – as nation after nation fell into financial crisis at the hands of the rapid global mobility of capital.

The corruption of Deng Xiao-Ping’s capitalist road and the Yeltsin-Putin regimes in post-1989 Russia, the African National Congress’s betrayal of its own charter in the economic rules of the road imposed as the price of power and self-government all showed the shock doctrine in increasingly refined forms. But the formula remained: torture or similar one-on-one terrorism, a return to market fundamentalism and a rejection of democratic economic planning and suppression of popular support for a people-first economy.

In 1993 economist John Williamson, coiner of the term “The Washington Consensus,” told an international economics conference that “it could conceivably make sense to think of deliberately provoking a crisis so as to remove the political logjam to reform.” Deliberate crisis creation, Klein says wonderingly, was now “being openly discussed.” (SD 256)



But reform was not the only object; increasingly, the virtue of crisis – for Wall Street – was the increased access of US global capital to national markets that had been closed. When the Asian Tigers fell into recession in 1997, US industries and financiers snapped up huge family enterprises – *chaebols* – in South Korea. In the span of 20 months “there were 186 major mergers and acquisitions” in the SE Asian nations whose economies had come under siege, and the *Wall Street Journal* headlined “Wall Street Scavenging in Asia-Pacific.” Shock capitalism was fundamentalizing the globe’s economy. (SD 273, 276)

The 9/11 attacks brought the shock doctrine recipe home to the US, and Hurricane Katrina provides a close-up model of the “clean slate” concept for refashioning usual democratic attitudes. The privatization of homeland security and then, in the Rumsfeld era, of the military put more and more power in the hands of corporations and financialist interests. Though she relates a fair number of instances of corporate-government collusion and outright corrupt practices, Klein argues that “stories about corruption and revolving doors leave a false impression. They imply that there is still a clear line between the state and the [disaster capitalism] complex, when in fact that line disappeared long ago.” (SD 315) The imposition of a Chicago-flavored constitution on Iraq’s puppet Bush government exemplified this principle, once 9/11 had provided the disturbance that allowed homeland security to take center stage in the market-fundamentalist project. In Iraq “all the careful efforts during the nineties to present ‘free trade’ as something other than an imperial project were abandoned.” (SD 343), bringing what the *Economist* called the “wish-list that foreign investors and donor agencies dream of for developing markets.” (SD 345)

After any natural disaster, authoritarianism at least temporarily becomes the go-to regime model for recovery. So disaster capitalism worked wonderfully well (for the capitalist elite) when natural disaster came to call. After the devastating tsunami of 2004, beachfront areas of Sri Lanka were slickly appropriated from traditional fishing communities and turned into tourist magnets. And Hurricane Katrina’s obliteration of much of New Orleans offered (with the complaisant aid of the Bush administration) huge opportunities for taking autonomy away from longstanding black communities and even indulging one of Milton Friedman’s pet projects, converting public schools to private.

The symmetry of Klein’s argument in *Shock Doctrine* can make the reader suspicious – surely some other factors had a role in these nefarious takeovers of national economies? But the frequent surface crises often exhibit the economic underpinning that gained steadily through the Reagan-Thatcher era, went bipartisan in the US through the Clinton years and then went whole-hog Cheneyite and never looked back after 9/11. Klein’s steady and credible reporting on this hidden pattern is persuasive. And the pattern instilled a slightly different and quite pernicious cultural strain of cronyism and opportunism in the US and the global financial world that took its cues from the US: “Once you accept that profit and greed as practiced on a mass scale create the greatest possible benefits for any society, pretty much any act of personal enrichment can be justified as a contribution to the great creative cauldron of capitalism, generating wealth and spurring economic growth – even if it’s only for yourself and your colleagues,” Klein says. (SD 235) That steady shift in attitudes and practices, amounting to a hegemonic tightening of the corporate grip on US political life, led to the crisis that changes everything.

The ultimate, irreversible shock is represented by anthropogenic climate change in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Planet*. Again, as poor people and workers are back on their heels due to drought, food insecurity, and constant disruption of their living situation (especially the six hundred million living on vulnerable coastline), it’s the corporate, moneyed few who can gain even more substantive hegemony. Klein sees that as a severe, transnational threat, with the global corporations already assembling their private armies to enforce the two-tiered society of the climate future (as already envisioned by Hollywood): elites in their bubble-like enclaves, and



the helots struggling in a hellish new environment. (*TCE* 9) Klein's two books considered here, published seven years apart, nevertheless dovetail powerfully.

The lingering hegemonic power of market fundamentalism, Chicago-style, has created the worst-case scenario for dealing with the crisis of climate change. The growth-mad ideology of global capitalism, which accelerates the destruction of the climate, is also the political context in which that destruction must be contested. "Climate change ... landed on the public agenda at the peak of free-market, end-of-history triumphalism, which was very bad timing indeed." And "Market fundamentalism has... systematically sabotaged our collective response to climate change." Later, more bluntly: "our economic system and our planetary system are now at war." (*TCE* 19, 21). Against that must come, she insists, "a vision in which we collectively use the crisis to leap somewhere that seems, frankly, better than where we are now." (*TCE* 7).

The unexpectedly rapid growth of emissions, shortening the timeline for remedies, stems largely from economic growth in the emerging BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) nations in recent decades and illustrates "the spectacular success multinational corporations have had in globalizing the high-consumption-based economic model pioneered in wealthy Western countries." (*TCE* 412)

At the Climate March in late 2014, DSA members and other left formations marched in the section of that massive turnout labeled "We Know Who's Responsible." Despite the cacophony of climate denial from the Right, the responsible parties know damn well they are responsible, Klein demonstrates. One of her best reporting techniques in both books is to immerse herself in the forums and ceremonies of the confident and powerful. Covering a meeting of the climate-denying Heartland Foundation, she surmises "these hard-core ideologues understand the real significance of climate change better than most of the 'warmists' in the political center, the ones who are still insisting that the response can be painless and gradual. ... when it comes to the scope and depth of change required to avert catastrophe, they are right on the money." (*TCE* 43)

"When climate change deniers claim that global warming is a plot to redistribute wealth, it is not (only) because they are paranoid. It is because they are paying attention," Klein says. Caustically, she adds, "their dominance-based worldview provides them with the intellectual tools to write off huge swaths of humanity, and indeed to rationalize profiting from the meltdown." (*TCE* 48) And in respect to the wider resistance to climate change (including among workers, some unionized) she quotes Upton Sinclair: "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it." (*TCE* 46) Other than the standard sniping at construction unions desperate for the meagre job fallout from the Keystone XL Pipeline project, Klein has regrettably little to say about workers, organized or not, as agents of change in the climate battle. Many unions, especially in the Southern Cone, were singled out in *Shock Doctrine* as victimized and destroyed by the triple whammy of full-bore Chicago Boys shock treatment; in *This Changes Everything* the focus shifts to other frontline communities.

Klein has not only displayed the usual suspects in climate aggravation – deep sea oil spills, extraction regimes from fracking to minerals and tar sands exploitation – but she has reported on site from some of them. A Canadian, she gives special attention to the Alberta tar sands monstrosity and the First Nations peoples whose lands it is despoiling. The pan-tribal

organization Idle No More is fighting energy exploitation throughout the country and providing a model for what Klein hopes will be the seedbed of a worldwide push-back against Big Energy. “Resistance to high-risk extreme extraction is building a global, grassroots and broad-based network the likes of which the environmental movement has rarely seen.” She calls it (as do others) “Blockadia,” a “roving transnational conflict,” and confers nationhood on it. (TCE 294-5)

Klein seems to calculate that desperation overcomes inertia among frontline communities – in part because their grievance is tied to their ancestral land – and that will cause the “mass jailbreak from the house that their [corporate-capitalist] ideology built” (TCE 63)

But for the middle class that is the core (or potential core) of climate activism,

“What if part of the reason we have failed to act is not because we are too selfish to care about an abstract or seemingly far-off problem –but because we are utterly overwhelmed by how much we do care.” (TCE 461)

Here she touches on, but does not explore, the well-developed theory of “threat communication” and its degrees. When a looming threat is detailed in news or propaganda, it won’t elicit action unless it falls into a perceived comfort zone: This is something I could do something about. If the threat is too low or too far away, no response will be triggered. If the threat appears overwhelming, exceeds perceived opportunities for activist agency, the message recipient likely will shut down and change the subject mentally. This is a critical problem for environmentalists of the left, who must couple the increasingly unpleasant science of climate change with the very difficult politics of remedying it.

Where Klein could envision well-regulated, democratic market society as a reasonable alternative to the Chicago gospel in *Shock Doctrine*, she is gloomier in *This Changes Everything* about the prospects of a democratic-electoral base for change because the hour is so late and so many opportunities have been lost. High-friction change in lifestyles and jobs, she asserts early in the book, will include a big role for authority, expert or not:

“There are legitimate fears too of what some call ‘green fascism’ – an environmental crisis so severe that it becomes the pretext for authoritarian forces to seize control in the name of restoring some kind of climate order.” (TCE 54)

But to balance that she concludes

...in the hot and stormy future we have already made inevitable through our past emissions, an unshakeable belief in the equal rights of all people and a capacity for deep compassion will be the only things standing between civilization and barbarism. (TCE 462)

“...there is still time to avert catastrophic warming,” Klein asserts, “but not within the rules of capitalism as it is currently constructed,” an “economic system that fetishizes GDP growth above everything else.” (TCE 88) The current growth imperative and the level of waste and overconsumption that it demands, she says, give us an exaggerated notion of the actual lifestyle changes that managing climate change demands in its turn.

Does she have specific solutions, though? Klein's gloomy scenario requires resources for the reversal, and she proposes taxes on financial transactions, on the fossil fuel companies ("before they are significantly less profitable"), via a carbon tax and ending subsidies, and significant cutbacks in military spending in all nations. She synthesizes some polls deftly to show that public opinion would embrace taxes that run counter to "our culture of lopsided sacrifice" in which corporations skate the consequences of their own greed. And she neatly equates fossil fuel companies to tobacco companies, eventually to shift in the public eye from pillars of commerce to providers of poison, so that finally there can be "a serious discussion about whether those [fossil fuel] profits are so illegitimate that they deserve to be appropriated and reinvested in solutions to the climate crisis." (*TCE* 355)

Economic clout can undermine law, though, of course. The failures of the promises made at abolition are examples. "The fact that our most heroic social justice movements won on the legal front but suffered big losses on the economic front is precisely why our world is as fundamentally unequal and unfair as it remains." (*TCE* 455-458)

But Klein's imperative for lower growth in a framework of class equity is vulnerable to Elizabeth Kolbert's critique (*New York Review of Books*, Dec. 4, 2014, 14-16): Klein "floats the 'managed degrowth' concept ... but... how this plays out she leaves unexplored" and "she vaguely tells us that we have to consume less, but not how much less, or what we'll have to give up." Kolbert herself acknowledges that if those burdened with first-world problems are actually informed what sacrifices are necessary, they turn to another subject.

Planning – industrial policy, "picking winners" – can make great strides against climate catastrophe, as Klein points out in the case of Germany. The planning required for combating climate change, Klein points out, is radically different from the centralized planning and mega-projects beloved of Eastern European governments during the Cold War or the World Bank and IMF of the "Washington Consensus" heyday. Instead, decentralization of energy production to the level of the residential rooftop solar installation gets most traction against emissions. The point here, a socialist reader might observe, is not to devolve the responsibility to the individual; the society manages for equity and the individual receives the programmatic benefits.

For a writer who is sometimes optimistic about our ability to slow and compensate for climate change, Klein shows a remarkable affinity with the skeptics of expert authority and climate science, scoffing at an international conference brainstorming how to "hack the planet" with technological solutions to "suck the carbon out of the atmosphere." Certainly some of those engaged in these pursuits are moonshine peddlers, but the techno-optimists may be pointing toward solutions that would undermine Klein's reliance on stringent "de-growth" as a solution. Readers of Annalee Newitz's clever and well-reported book [\*Scatter, Adapt and Remember: How Humans Will Survive a Mass Extinction \(Anchor, 2013\)\*](#) get a more measured view of how current and future technology might make a difference.

Lester Brown has, likewise, converged both technology and political change for many years in programmatic books like [\*Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization\*](#). (WorldWatch 2009). In sequence, his model envisions 1. Stabilizing Population; 2. Eradicating Poverty; 3. Restoring the Earth's Natural Support

Systems; 4. Stabilizing Climate. So the political comes first, not later or as an afterthought.

Klein argues that the imperatives of fighting climate change and preserving a planet that can support humans will bring about the political changes that are necessary – a difficult argument to make, though not unlike Lester Brown's. The race between some form of socialism or the barbarism of a world of climate refugees and snuggled-up elites all points to what Klein asserts is a threshold human event, but also is characteristic of the too-inspirational and less-analytical moments that mar her otherwise well-reported argument:

...the climate moment offers an overarching narrative in which everything from the fight for good jobs to justice for migrants to reparations for historical wrongs like slavery and colonialism can all become part of the grand project of building a nontoxic, shockproof economy before it's too late. (*TCE* 154)

Later, she adds:

So climate change does not need some shiny new movement... . Climate change can be the force – the grand push – that will bring together all of these still living movements. (*TCE* 459)

And it will not be easy: the boat will be under renovation as the storm reaches its peak. “There may have been a time when engaging in resistance against a life-threatening system and building alternatives to that system could be meaningfully separated, but today we have to do both simultaneously...” (*TCE* 405)

As socialists, we have to be skeptical about what seems here to be magical thinking. Klein acknowledges the mass of well-financed disinformation surrounding the climate change question. But she seems to discount the social inertia that capitalism imposes through fear and the all-too-human resistance to news of future danger beyond the now – the real disabling of the individual and collective will to agency that is built into capitalist social practice. Those factors – which we socialists credit ourselves with understanding, and educating and agitating against – are the real danger to a resolute attack on climate change. Workers and their unions must be critical allies, and take on the fight because their old enemies the bosses are also the ones devaluing any pay or benefits raise they win at the bargaining table by wrecking the planet on which they make their living. Klein is clear that alternative energy requires new kinds of job skills but does not dwell on how those will be imparted – or demanded.

Naomi Klein has made a valuable contribution in these two books to detailing the role of capitalism – especially the market fundamentalism that is so hard to expunge – in promoting authoritarian regimes and inequality, as well as in generating the carbon poison that has already propelled us irreversibly into the era of anthropogenic climate change. She convincingly demonstrates that a growth-fueled economy is incompatible, and inimical, to a sustainable world. She has made it clear that the corporate powers of Big Energy and the free-market snake oil specialists will fight back – hard – and that existing governments are joined to them at the hip, with separation a monumental task. The fundamentalists have the advantage, and their theories have been (as Friedman put it) “lying around” ready to go to work whenever catastrophe occurred. The correctives for both a planetary civilization of inequality and a planetary disaster

are, as she says, equally conjoined in concept, but the practical chore of keeping them in harness going forward will require a more intricate struggle than she has portrayed.

[Film: The Imitation Game](#) AND [A Russian Hockey Film: The Red Army](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

### ***The Washington Socialist* <> January 2015**

*By Daniel C. Adkins*

The film *The Imitation Game* chronicles key parts of Alan Turing's life associated with the birth of digital computing, and the breaking of Enigma, a cryptologic method used by the Nazis to transmit strategic intelligence codes in World War II. It also deals with institutionalized prejudice against gays, nerds, and women during this period in British history and how bypassing those prejudices helped win the war.

The subject matter is the brilliant life and work of Alan Turing and the English code breakers of Bletchley Park. The film has a true emotional core of those difficult times, although it did not adhere exactly to historical realities. It was well acted, and supported by relevant historical footage and CGI animation. One of the core storylines was how people think and how different mental modes can be used to create useful and needed ideas that benefit us all. This storyline was reinforced throughout the film. One historical point that was hinted at was Alan Turing's brain decline due to his choice of chemical castration over imprisonment, after he was exposed as homosexual and convicted under obscenity laws. He was shown not being able to do a simple crossword puzzle. His brain's decline might have been a major contributing factor in his suicide a year later at age 41, as he was not able to continue his work, which was a major driving force in his life.

The film claims that breaking the German code shortened the war by at least two years. This could be debated since in the beginning of the war **Ultra**, the code word for the intelligence source, was not decisive because the allies did not have the forces to stop the Germans anyway. It can be argued that the reason Hitler lost was that he vastly underestimated the productive capacity of the U.S., Russia, and Britain. This underestimating probably had more to do with his racist ideology interfering with Germans' predictive skills.

The story of how **Ultra** was used is fascinating, but was only used as a backdrop. The film showed the code breaker group making the agonizing decision to not tell an allied convoy's commanders they were about to be attacked, because it would not help the war effort if the Germans knew that the Enigma Code had been broken. Yet **Ultra** intercepts were used to reroute convoys. What did happen in WWII was that the British city of Coventry was not warned when

**Ultra** intercepted the plan to bomb it. It was deemed that the Germans would realize their codes were broken. The history purist may be slightly disappointed because the historical reality is so fascinating, but the medium of film is not able to tell an extensive tale, but can convey an emotional reality.

A trailer for the film can be found at:

<http://trailers.apple.com/trailers/weinstein/theimitationgame/>

### [A Russian Hockey Film: The Red Army](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

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*By Daniel C. Adkins*

The documentary *Red Army* is about the Russian hockey teams from the '70s or '80s to the present. It is appropriately called *Red Army* because all team members were officers in the real Red Army during Soviet times. The sole duties of these officers were to train and play hockey for eleven months of the year. The training was grueling, but also imaginative. The film follows team captain Slava Fetisov from team member, team captain, national hero, to political enemy.

The label "Red Army" has many meanings to Americans. It might mean the Russian revolutionaries as shown in the film *Doctor Zhivago*. For those familiar with World War II, the Red Army was the army that primarily defeated Hitler, while suffering millions killed and captured. Over 24 million Russian troops were killed or captured by the Germans. Others will remember the Red Army as occupying Eastern Europe and putting down rebellions.

The concept of sacrifice is a major part of Russian military history that carries over to its sport culture. What comes out in the film is that sport training was so intense that it marginalized the players' personal lives. The idea that winning was so important that the use of the most authoritarian means was justified also echoes the Red Army history.

An intriguing aspect to Soviet/Russian Hockey was that the playing style is very creative and cooperative. The main idea was to control the puck by continually passing the puck. The North Americans, instead, play a very individualistic and brutal form where individuals are valued for taking shots and scoring. The North American players were generally larger than the Russians and played a rougher game. The Soviets tried to win Olympic medals across the board, which meant that Russian hockey players were not the first pick among national athletes, or as large as many opponents. The Russian teams played a fluid game emphasized teamwork and passing partly compensating for the size difference. The Russians had to think differently to win. To this end, chess champions sometimes coached Russian players. This might have been influenced by collective ideology or that Russia has always had a significant intellectual history and culture. One example is that a Russian mathematician first identified the math behind U.S.

stealth technology. The film has a surprise ending in that the team captain becomes a rebel and then evolves.

*The IMDB website says RED ARMY will be in theaters in late January 2015*

## [GOOD READS](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

### GOOD READS FOR SOCIALISTS JANUARY 2015

#### ***The Washington Socialist* <> January 2015**

A tough critique of capitalist assimilation of many environmental movements as represented by the “Big Green” national environmental movements. Scott Parkin in *Counterpunch* says major environmental groups can be as dangerous as Big Carbon in their way.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/12/02/between-empire-and-its-subjects/>

The reliably progressive Tom Edsall poses political questions about the Democrats’ posture and its rep with the electorate. The focus is on the drag the ACA puts on party fortunes; the surprise is that Schumer, the senator from Wall Street, actually suggested prosecuting some bankers to gain the faith of the middle class... <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/03/opinion/is-obamacare-destroying-the-democratic-party.html?ref=opinion>

Brentin Mock, who writes the “Read, Black and Green” blog for the eco-radical publication Grist, explores how environmentalists find their way to rationally supporting the “Black Lives Matter” project. One anti-fracking campaigner who works in poor, white Appalachia told him “At the end of the day, the same corporate interests that are behind these private prisons and mass incarceration are also behind poisoning our air and water.”

[http://grist.org/climate-energy/how-to-set-aside-your-anxieties-and-join-the-black-lives-matter-movement/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=Weekly%2520Dec%252016&utm\\_campaign=weekly](http://grist.org/climate-energy/how-to-set-aside-your-anxieties-and-join-the-black-lives-matter-movement/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=Weekly%2520Dec%252016&utm_campaign=weekly)

Patricia Williams, critical legal scholar and author of *The Rooster’s Egg* and other books, talks about the rejection of expert authority and intellectual enterprise in the US in this *Guardian* piece: [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/may/18/anti-intellectualism-us-book-banning?CMP=ema\\_565](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/may/18/anti-intellectualism-us-book-banning?CMP=ema_565)

Lane Kenworthy’s 2014 book *Social Democratic America* argues for a Nordic-style variety of politics as appropriate for the US – a vision that might have seemed close at hand after World War II but seems a bit of a reach today. Rich Yeselson in *Dissent* finds it a compelling goal in a

review that also appeared on *Portside*.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?tab=wm#inbox/14aa3173186f07a2>

Here's a take on socialism's practice for today and tomorrow – not yesterday, he says – by Sam Webb, national chair of CPUSA from 2000 to 2014. It's from *People's World*, a CPUSA site. Andy Feeney says “it's really interesting to see what Webb is saying about the impossibility of building socialism in the U.S. by “looking in the rearview mirror.” Click on Webb's byline to see his brief bio.

<http://peoplesworld.org/a-season-s-reflections-on-socialism/>

From *The Nation* via *Portside*... John Nichols on helping defend the postal service and its unions from the privatization assault by Congress and the neocons. Suggested by Kurt Stand.

<http://portside.org/2014-12-23/thank-postal-workers-fighting-save-postal-service>

### [Holiday Greetings and New Year Thoughts](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

### ***The Washington Socialist* <> January 2015**

*By Kurt Stand*

“ ... I am lying here on a stone-hard mattress in a dark cell, around me the usual quiet of a cemetery; one imagines oneself in the grave. From the window, the reflection of the lantern – which burns all night in front of the prison – is drawn on the ceiling. From time to time, one hears, quite muffled, the distant rattling of a passing train or, from nearby under the window, a sentinel clearing his throat; he is slowly taking a few steps in his heavy boots in order to move his stiff legs. The sand rustles so hopelessly beneath his steps that the whole desolation and inescapability of existence rises from it into the damp, dark night.

“There I lie, quite alone, wrapped in those manifold black scarves of darkness, boredom, confinement, and winter – and at the same time, my heart burns with an incomprehensible, unknown inner happiness, as if I were walking over a blooming field in radiant sunshine. And I smile at life in the darkness as I were aware of some magical secret which might confute the lies, the baseness and the sadness and transform them into sheer brightness and felicity.” (Letter written by Rosa Luxemburg to Sonja Liebknecht in mid-December 1917)

In prison the coming of Christmas, of the holiday season, is often a time of tension for it is a time when distance from family, from loved ones, is felt most keenly. On the other hand, the New Year is greeted more warmly; if nothing else each year done marks one less to do and often there



is a momentary feeling of hope in an environment where such is otherwise in short supply. Something similar is frequently experienced in the world far beyond prison walls — the tension of shopping, of travel, of budgeting, of work, of managing expectations, boil up in the weeks prior to Christmas. Then comes the celebration, the fellowship and cheer followed quickly by New Year's Day with its resolutions, plans and hopes. Reality soon sets in, but the fleeting glimpse of getting from "here" to an individually glimpsed "there," is real too. Though we don't each feel that way every turn of the page, it is common enough, and has been going back through the ages. Virtually every culture, every religion has some sort of celebration marking the change of year, marking winter solstice, which combines the fear of fallow crops and anticipation of rebirth and new growth.

That balance is a way to look at developments within our society in our own present. Certainly much has taken place that is cause for anger, if not despair. The police killings of African Americans in Ferguson, Cleveland, Staten Island, are signs of the violence that is too present in our society, violence which is too often countenanced with the impunity given to those who kill in an "official" capacity. The tragic assassination-style shooting of two police officers in New York on December 21 doesn't invalidate the truth of the injustice of racism and inequality; rather, it only underscores the need for systemic changes that ensure the promise of equality and "justice for all."

So too, the revelations about rape at the University of Virginia – revelations that speak the truth notwithstanding the weakness of the *Rolling Stone* article that initially reported on it – because it speaks of a violence ingrained in everyday life and so accepted by too many as "normal," even by youth such as those in Steubenville, Pennsylvania for whom rape was something that could be boasted about on social media. Violence of a sort that is normalized because it reproduces divisions of privilege and oppression that divide and redivide our society – and is then replicated in the violence our society engages abroad through what has become a state of permanent war. The seemingly unending parade of suicides by those who do the fighting provides a glimpse of the impact of our wars on those who fight them; no glimpse is allowed of the impact on the countries we invade where such costs are immeasurably worse.

Of course, the Senate report on torture does provide such a view to those willing to open their eyes; although reports without action means that those culpable, those who give the orders, don't face consequences. Once again, the impunity of privilege raises its ugly head. All this in an "improving" economy which hasn't slowed inequality, has failed to stem the growth of poverty, and which has done little or nothing to overcome the insecurity felt by the vast majority of the 99%. Labor union strength continues to wane relative to corporate executives who accept no limits on power and profit. Conditions that speak to the need for progressive change, for radical change, yet conditions which instead saw reaction triumph in November's national elections, elections which offered little prospect for needed substantive changes in Washington DC, suburban Maryland or Northern Virginia.

Yet hope finds firm ground to stand upon in the coming year. The massive national climate change march a few months ago signaled the depth of awareness of the dangers environmental destruction poses that no amount of corporate money can hide; the ban on fracking in New York state is a reflection of the success that can be attained when people continue to agitate, educate,

organize (as the IWW once preached and practiced). The massive outpouring of protests against police violence and racial injustice in the wake of the above mentioned killings contains the promise and possibility of more substantive change, just as the strikes and protests at fast food outlets, at Walmarts, at restaurants show that working-class action continues even with labor under attack – while minimum wage and sick leave gains across the country as well as locally are signs that victories can be won. And not just local victories. Obama’s announcement of immigration reforms is a step forward for millions, notwithstanding all the remaining limitations on the rights of the undocumented. And the normalization of relations with Cuba, the release of the last three of the Cuba 5 from prison is an enormous victory in the name of peace, as well as being a simple step of human decency. Behind the President’s actions lay the work of individuals, the strength of movements, that refused to give up and which will continue to push for a world of greater justice. Cause indeed to welcome the New Year.

So too for us in Metro DC DSA. We remain smaller and narrower than we should be, just as does our entire national organization and all organizations with socialist goals. Yet it is also true that those limitations were not barriers to increased activity last year, activity that gives us the potential to grow in numbers, in diversity and in rootedness, activity that itself exemplifies agitation, education and organization. Building our socialist presence locally is mirrored by DSA nationally. On-line meetings to analyze the relevance of Antonio Gramsci’s writings to current challenges facing socialist organizations provided one forum to air opinions amongst active members. So too did similar strategy meetings that allowed members from across the country to engage in a process to refine and further develop DSA’s perspective. Such discussions are signs of growth, a growth that is not taking place in a vacuum. Rather, it is part of an upsurge that may strengthen the presence of a socialist movement more broadly within the US. The DSA National Convention planned for 2015 will be a time to take stock and move forward by moving against the grain.

By looking for the next place to take a step is how we can both see, and see beyond, the disheartening and dispiriting news reports which greet us most days. However much power is still held tightly by corporate power while political initiative remains in most instances with reaction, opposition and alternatives grow beneath the surface and come up for light when nurtured and fed with the values of the world that could be. Thus, it is right to welcome in the New Year no matter the harshness of winter, no matter the harshness of our own or others current circumstances because it is out of the tragedies of the present that we can forge a better future – so long as we remember all sides of the world in which we live.

“Pessimism is cowardice. The man who cannot frankly acknowledge the ‘Jim-Crow’ car as a fact and yet live and hope is simply afraid either of himself or of the world. There is not in the world a more disgraceful denial of human brotherhood than the ‘Jim-Crow’ car of the southern United States; but, too, just as true, there is nothing more beautiful in the universe than sunset and moonlight on Montego Bay in far Jamaica. And both things are true and both belong to this our world, and neither can be denied.” (W.E.B. DuBois, *Darkwater*, 1920).

Aspirations and fears, be they in 1917 and 1920, be they in 2014 or occur in 2015, are parts of the whole within which we live and create. Let us work in the days and years to come to give greater reality to the happiness and beauty that Luxemburg and DuBois and so many others saw and sought and so give content to a collective wish for a Happy New Year, to a world of peace and good will.

## [Socialism and Rape](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

### ***The Washington Socialist* <> January 2015**

By Carolyn M. Byerly

[W]e made a political analysis of the crimes against women, not only the most brutal forms like rape but the lesser forms of harassment like pinching, showing how they fit into the general sexist structure of society. Women can really understand and identify with this analysis.

Pat Galligan (in *Feminism and Socialism*, 1972)

Rape was seen as a way to remind women that men were the dominant gender. Rape was viewed as a form of oppression that was used by men to keep women in their place in society. In this sense, society felt that women, not men, were responsible for their rape. The socialist feminist wanted to change the perspective that rape was not a crime against women.

Laura Kramer (in *The Sociology of Gender*, 2011)

Rape keeps insinuating itself into our reality, this time by way of a *Rolling Stone* article (<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-20141119>) and the aftermath it has caused at University of Virginia.

Once the November article appeared, UVA President Teresa Sullivan moved swiftly into action and addressed the fraternity culture blamed for the alleged gang-rape of the woman “Jackie” central to the magazine article. She suspended fraternities for the remainder of the school year and called on local police to investigate rape allegations, including the one involving Jackie (<http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/22/us/university-of-virginia-sexual-assault-allegations/>).

But all was not well in the newsroom. As allegations of inconsistencies in Jackie’s story surfaced, the *Rolling Stone* editors wisely turned the investigation of its journalistic process over to Columbia Journalism School, requesting a report of where their reporting and editing failed (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2014/12/22/rolling-stone-farms-out-review-of-u-va-rape-story-to-columbia-journalism-school/>). The president of the UVA’s Interfraternity Council has said that fraternities should continue their efforts to reform their

system and to work with the university to stop sexual violence on campus ([www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/u-va-remains-resolved-to-address-sexual-violence-as-rolling-stone-account-unravels/2014/12/06/66c0c780-7d64-11e4-84d4-7c896b90abdc\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/u-va-remains-resolved-to-address-sexual-violence-as-rolling-stone-account-unravels/2014/12/06/66c0c780-7d64-11e4-84d4-7c896b90abdc_story.html)).

The UVA story will go on a while and then die down at some point as all high-profile rape cases do, but the incidence and fact of rape will not, and its evolution as a central political issue of modern times compels us consider how socialists have weighed in on it over time.

Rape and its sister problem battering have been the anchor issues of feminism for half a century. Women began to rise up angrily against these widespread, largely unrecognized and certainly unpunished crimes in the early 1970s. New York Radical Feminists held a widely publicized public “speak out” on rape in 1971, and soon women across the country were staging similar events. The anti-rape movement built quickly, with women protesting police treatment of rape victims and the failure of prosecutors to prosecute accused rapists. Rape crisis centers formed, composed of volunteers who listened to women’s stories and accompanied victims to police stations to report. Members of rape crisis groups had expanded their work by the late 1970s to include preventative educational programs in schools and trainings for police and prosecutors on how to work with victims. In large cities first, and then smaller communities, feminists instigated the formation of “special victim units” within police departments, and the placement of “legal advocates” in prosecutors’ offices. State level networks grew across the country and by 1979, the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault formed and began holding annual conferences. Women would never again be silent about their assaults, and they had stopped letting men get away with it.

One structural problem facing women of that period was antiquated rape laws, which defined rape in ways inconsistent with women’s assault experiences and thereby made it more difficult for prosecutors to build a case. Neither were women likely to report their assaults, fearing that no one would believe them and that they would be stigmatized, both by the criminal justice system and among those close to them. The legal situation motivated the liberal feminist group National Organization for Women’s legal team to organize a state-by-state rape-law reform campaign in 1974. NOW leaders used sophisticated media information and educated reporters to broaden public discourse, something that paid off with increased (and better informed) reporting. News stories began to incorporate new feminist terminology – sexual assault, violence against women, acquaintance rape, sexual harassment, etc. – and to carry a feminist analysis often in the voices of rape movement leaders and rape survivors. Statutes were indeed revised in one state after another.

The most far-reaching feminist analysis of the problem came from socialist feminists who situated violence against women at the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism. Sociologist Laura Kramer states that “under patriarchy, women were viewed simply as the property of men and not as individuals in society.” Therefore, socialist feminists reasoned, when it came to the issue of rape, men felt that women were simply subordinates who had no rights of their own. For men, rape did not exist. While socialist feminists viewed rape as a form of oppression that was used by men to keep women in their place in society, they struggled at first to find its more specific connections to capitalism.

Most male Marxists and socialists had been silent on whether and how class and sexual oppression coincided. Those few sources that did – e.g., Engels' *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Trotsky's statements about women in *Problems of Life, The Revolution Betrayed*, and eventually *Women and the Family* – were all focused on women's subordination within the family unit. None addressed sexual violence. Socialist feminists of the 1970s thought in bigger terms than their male comrades about women in society and questioned the ways that sexual violence (and women's fear of it) extended into other institutions, like the workplace, education and political life.

Socialist feminists saw women as exploited not only at home (through labor and nurturance associated with the reproduction of the species), but as lower-waged, less powerful laborers in the workplace, and as absent from legislative bodies where public policies were adopted. Rape and other forms of sexual violence figured into the dynamics underlying these forms of subordination, and, because of that. And, according to Marxist political theorist Nancy Hartsock, "we are dealing with a gendered power of relations based in what our culture has defined as sexuality . . . which must be understood to express the experience of the ruling gender." In language reminiscent of Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*, Hartsock argued that the

ideas of the ruling class express the dominant material relations for other classes, so too we can expect that because of masculine cultural hegemony, these sexual dynamics typify some women . . . and correspond to men's rather than women's experience.

Hartsock's theory of feminist historical materialism remains one of the clearest expressions of how capitalism and patriarchy work together to suppress women's power. The masculine cultural hegemony that Hartsock referred to was enacted not only through men's outright coercion (sexual assault and implied threats) but women's efforts to conform to masculine expectations to better assure their safety and well-being.

Socialist feminists helped to bring to light to the social problems associated with rape, factoring in race and sexual orientation. In their analysis of the problem, men and women were divided in society, with white men being seen as the most dominant. All feminists – socialist as well as those from other philosophical positions – fought to have rape recognized as a crime, as a way to alleviate the major differences between men and women.

The more complex articulations of rape by socialist feminists remain with us today, but are little spoken about in public discourse, particularly in rape stories carried in the mainstream corporate media. Indeed, feminist voices of any stripe are less heard from today than in the earlier days of the movement, even as one rape scandal after another has emerged to consume the public imagination. This would be a perfect segue into a feminist political economic analysis of today's conglomerated news industry, but that is a topic for another commentary.

A better place to end would be to make several observations. The first is that the anti-rape movement, which began in the early 1970s, has been an international movement, largely led by radical and socialist feminists who have seen the inseparable connections between gender and class oppression. The second is that this movement has produced measurable results in most countries in the form a new language and analysis of rape, in the reform and/or adoption of new

laws, and in changes in gender relations. In the last of these, it is important to recognize women's important male allies, many of whom truly get it and feel compelled to speak up and work to stop sexual violence, and to create more egalitarian relations with women, both those whom they love and those they interact with in other capacities. This dialectical process has been slow but productive, and continues to demand the leadership of socialists who understand that women remain the majority of the victims of men's violence as well as the poorest members of capitalist societies.

### Sources:

The author drew from a number of sources, including *Feminism and Socialism* (Pathfinder Press, 1972); Nancy C. M. Hartsock's *Money, Sex and Power* (Northeastern University Press, 1985); Laura Kramer, *The Sociology of Gender* (Oxford University Press, 2011, also at <http://212906806124441495.weebly.com/>); Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open* (Penguin Books, 2000); and Carolyn M. Byerly and Marcus Hill, "Reformulation Theory: Gauging Feminist Impact on News of Violence Against Women," *Journal of Women and Gender* ([www.academia.edu/2247510/Reformulation\\_Theory\\_Gauging\\_Feminist\\_Impact\\_on\\_News\\_of\\_Violence\\_Against\\_Women](http://www.academia.edu/2247510/Reformulation_Theory_Gauging_Feminist_Impact_on_News_of_Violence_Against_Women)).

### [Sustainability Tech Enablers Increasing](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

### ***The Washington Socialist* <> January 2015**

*By Daniel Adkins*

New techniques are being commercialized that make wind energy more economical and consumer-reliable. These techniques include better batteries, and the use of ice, which can store energy when the demand is low at night. The stored energy would then be available during peak demand during the day. Batteries provide energy directly during the day's peak demand. Ice-Energy has created a unit, the Ice Bear, that uses electricity to freeze water at night, for individual large buildings and installations. During the day's peak heat, the Ice Bear is connected to air conditioning units via a coolant link for space cooling. When the ice has melted, the air conditioning unit operates normally.

[These techniques are currently being used by Southern California Edison](#), which has an excess of nighttime wind energy from windmills. If a utility bases its pricing on the time of day the energy is used, then the cost of these techniques can be compared to peak energy costs. An older way of meeting peak demand would be to use a jet turbine using oil or gas. A full-scale implementation

of these, and other storage techniques, could decrease the need for a number of power plants that burn fossil fuels for energy.

Locally, offshore wind energy in Maryland had been stalled by a [Department of Defense \(DoD\) objection](#) that offshore windmills would block needed radar scans. The defense worry was that the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, which tests aircraft, would not be able to observe those planes off Maryland Atlantic shore [when wind turbines are in operation](#). This objection may be negated when DoD tests two radar-detecting blimps around the Washington, DC area. The blimps are called aerostats because they are tethered and do not move freely. The first one can scan out to 500 kilometers. The second one has more precise radar and may make observation from the Patuxent facility unnecessary. This technology might be needed for Virginia's offshore wind power if our (Virginia) bases also have issues with wind turbines.

### [Welcome to 2015](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

Welcome to the January 2015 issue of the *Washington Socialist*, the newsletter of Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America.

**Metro DC DSA members turned out for the march against police violence Dec. 13 from Freedom Plaza to near the Justice Department.**



## [Yearly Report: What Our Local Did in 2014](#)

Thursday, January 1st, 2015

### ***The Washington Socialist* <> January 2015**

*By Andy Feeney*

**An Overview of the Year:** Last year was a busy one for Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America. Overall, the local's members and supporters participated in more than 50 events that had been announced beforehand on our Meetup.com site. Individual members and supporters took part in several others that were not advertised on Meetup. These included a year-long series of conference calls exploring future strategies for DSA at the national level, a national conference of the Young Democratic Socialists (YDS) in August, and a three-part webinar led by veteran activist Steve Max on how and whether U.S. capitalism can escape from a slowly unfolding crisis in profit levels, slowing growth rates, growing "financialization" and rising inequality that dates back to the 1970s.

When all the numbers are added up, Metro DC local members and supporters participated to some degree in at least 57 different DSA-related events during the year, or more than one per week.

In addition, the *Washington Socialist*, through various contributors published 11 editions of the local newsletter, which among them contained 98 different articles addressing a variety of subjects. On Metro DC DSA's Facebook page, which by year's end boasted 255 supporters, contributors posted hundreds of different items during the year, a surprisingly large fraction of these – but hardly all – being contributed by a single individual, the indefatigable religious socialist Michael Binder.

### **Introducing Our Socialist Book Group**

A newly organized activity of Metro DC DSA this year is our Socialist Book Group, which began operations in the fall with the reading and discussion of Mary Gabriel's *Love and Capital*, a biography of Karl Marx and Jennie von Westphalen and their family, as well as a social history of the tumultuous times in which Marx lived and wrote and in which his daughters sought to carry on his work. A discussion of a second Book Group selection, Nick Salvatore's award-winning social biography of Eugene V. Debs, is scheduled to occur this coming Feb. 1.

### **Major Organizing Activities and Salon Themes of the Year**



Summarizing the themes of dozens of different local-sponsored Meetup events and hundreds of newsletter articles and Facebook entries is a difficult task, but there were several major themes worth mentioning.

*Labor and Electoral Politics.* One big focus of the local in 2014 was on local electoral politics and Metro DC DSA's involvement in it, a topic requiring somewhat extensive treatment further below. Another key focus was labor solidarity work, much of it through our membership in the Washington local of Jobs with Justice (JwJ) but some of it involving other actions.

*Racial Justice and Black Radicalism.* Black socialist and radical thought was a frequent though not constant theme for the local in 2014, and a focus of several important events. At the end of the year, local DSAers turned out in large numbers for the Dec. 13 national march against police violence in Washington. A few DSA activists also took part in locally based organizing against the police targeting of black men in the weeks following the grand jury ruling in Ferguson, Mo.

Significant numbers of local DSA supporters also attended our August Socialist Salon on the Afro-Caribbean and libertarian socialism of C.L.R. James, a one-time associate of Trotsky who played a part in the Black Power movement of the 1960s and in earlier Pan-Africanist organizing that fostered anti-colonial revolutions in Africa following World War II. In a follow-up Salon, we also looked at the sometimes conflicted relationship between African nationalist leaders and Marxist socialists in the wake of successful anti-colonial struggles in various parts of Africa.

*Climate Change.* Activism around climate change was a lesser focus of our local in 2014, but at least four Washington-area activists with DSA ties traveled to New York City on Sept. 21 to participate with DSA members from other areas in the huge national climate march that day. In October, we followed up on the climate march at our membership meeting with a PowerPoint presentation led by Statehood Green Party activist and Howard University professor emeritus David Schwartzman on the economic and environmental potential of a "global green new deal." To some extent, climate change politics was an unexpected feature of Steve Max's national DSA webinar on the crisis in U.S. capitalism, for Max concluded that one way out of the crisis could potentially involve "creative destruction" (or in Marxist terms, a "revolution in the instruments in production") featuring the rapid development of green energy technologies in this society.

*Feminism, Socialist History, and Media and Internet Activism.* In other general meetings and Socialist Salons, our local also examined the hidden socialist history of International Women's Day, studied the sometimes tangled history of the anarchist and socialist left since 1850, and focused on the threats to Internet openness posed by media mergers and proposed Federal Communications Commission regulations.

*Movie Nights.* In an echo of that last discussion, a number of DSA members and supporters attended a special showing of the documentary film *The Internet's Own Boy*, outlining the inspired activism and sometimes tormented life of Internet rebel Aaron Schwartz, at the Lamont Street Collective in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood of D.C.

Another special movie event that more than a dozen DSA members attended was a special West End Theater showing of *Citizen Koch*, a documentary on the role of big money and the Koch-funded group Citizens for Prosperity in derailing efforts by labor activists to recall Wisconsin's rightwing, anti-labor governor Tom Walker.

*Legal Defense Work for Cindy McMillan of OWS Fame.* The legal defense of DSA activist Cindy McMillan, arrested during the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York a few years ago and convicted of assaulting a policeman who had grabbed her from behind at a demonstration, was the focus of a well-attended special event that local DSA members held in July.

*Reproductive Rights.* Earlier in the year, a small team of DSA member supported reproductive rights for Washington-area women by participating in a bowl-a-thon and billiards tournament that the DC Abortion Fund (DCAF) put on as a fundraiser. Unfortunately, the DSA team this year did not do very well in the DCAF tournament finals, but we are hoping that with more practice, the recruitment of new talent, and a good deal of luck, we may do better in 2015.

**Labor Activism in Greater Detail.** In support of labor solidarity and labor rights, local DSAers took part in a number of national and local events during the year aimed at bolstering the fortunes of organized and unorganized labor. The challenges that the U.S. working class faces given national and international economic trends was the focus in two Socialist Salons and several articles in the *Washington Socialist*, and throughout the year DSA representatives took part in several activities to promote H.R. 1000, a national "jobs for all" bill sponsored by Rep. John Conyers of Michigan. In addition to showing such theoretical solidarity with labor, local DSA members participated in scheduled meetings of the Washington-area Jobs with Justice throughout the year, and we contributed financial backing as well as attendees to JwJ's "I'll Be There" awards dinner in the summer as well as its Masquerade Ball at the end of the year.

Late in the year, five local DSA members attended a ["Troublemaker's School"](#) hosted by *Labor Notes* magazine and the AFL-CIO. At the local level, our local also had a representative present at rallies before the District Building in favor of two bills backed by the Employment Justice Project (EJP) and other local solidarity groups. One of these bills strengthens the legal protections available to low-income workers, especially recent immigrants, who are victimized by "wage theft" on the part of their employers. The other bill sought to improve the chances of people who have been released from prison being hired after serving out their sentences, by preventing potential employers from rejecting them without further question once they check "yes" in a box on an employment form asking if they have legal records. In late summer, the DC city council passed both the anti-wage theft bill and the ban-the-box bill promoted by EJP.

*The YDS National Conference.* In addition to the activities above, several younger local members and supporters attended the national Young Democratic Socialists conference held in western Pennsylvania in August.

*Social Outreach* – Putting the "Social" in Socialism. Then there were the purely social events that the local sponsored to attract potential members and give local socialists and interested outsiders a chance to meet in a progressive atmosphere without having to attend to any particular piece of political business. In 2014, such social events included monthly Socialist Happy Hours

held the fourth Wednesday of each month in the District and newly organized Socialist Happy Hours for Northern Virginia, which were held later in the year in Arlington on the second Thursdays of each month. The local also held a very well-attended Labor Day picnic at the Lamont Street Collective on Sept. 1.

*More on Our Local Electoral Work.* As mentioned above, electoral political work took up a large fraction of the local's time and attention in 2014. Early in the year, members voted for Metro DSA to support the candidacy of progressive restaurateur Andy Shallal, the proprietor of the Busboys & Poets restaurants, to run for mayor in the Democratic primaries. Later in the year, we opted to support the Rev. Graylan Hagler, a veteran social activist and one of the organizers of the Respect DC coalition to demand concessions from Wal-Mart in its siting of new stores here, in his run for an at-large seat on the District Council. We also supported open socialist Eugene Puryear, running on the Statehood Green ticket, in his bid for an at-large council seat. In addition, we endorsed Statehood Green candidate Joyce Robinson Paul for U.S. "shadow" representative, and two incumbent Democrats – Council Chairman Phil Mendelson and Delegate to Congress Eleanor Holmes Norton – for re-election.

In support of Shallal's primary fight, our local was only able to hold a fund-raising "meet and greet" event for the candidate. In supporting Hagler and Puryear, however, the local not only held "meet and greet" fundraisers for the candidates, but individual DSA members also canvassed for both candidates, both before the election and as poll workers on election day. Unfortunately, none of DSA's endorsed candidates except for Mendelson and Norton won this year, but our endorsements won the notice of both the *City Paper* and the *Washington Post*, and in the process of canvassing we came into contact with other local progressives who could become useful allies in the future.

*Evaluating the Year's Activity, and Thinking About the Future.* Not every DSA event and activity our local engaged in this year was successful or well-attended, but some of us think we took major steps this year in giving Metro DC DSA a more activist focus. We also appear to have attracted a small but growing number of younger socialists, including women, to what, just a few years ago, was an organization whose meetings were almost entirely monopolized by older white men.

To make further progress in the future, members of the Steering Committee and a number of more committed activists met in November for a day-long strategy session on what the local hopes to do in 2015. Among our key decisions at the strategy session were to alter the format of our membership meetings somewhat to make them more attractive to would-be supporters, to focus our activism this year on a single campaign, a "Fight for 15" that will work for the adoption of a \$15 an hour minimum wage in all three of our membership regions – DC itself, Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland. We also resolved to focus Salons and monthly membership meetings largely (although not exclusively) on labor solidarity work, feminism and the pursuit of racial justice. The Steering Committee will endeavor to keep *Washington Socialist* readers up to date on these and other changes as they are implemented.