

The Washington Socialist
Articles from the November 2014 Issue
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Editor: Woody Woodruff

[FIELD NOTES FROM A CATASTROPHE: The Washington Socialist's issue on the November 2014 Elections](#)

Tuesday, November 11th, 2014



Welcome to the November issue of *The Washington Socialist*, the monthly email newsletter of DC Metro Democratic Socialists of America –delayed ten days to allow for perspectival coverage of the November 4 election.

DSA's forays into electoral politics are always done with two sobering notions firmly in mind. The candidates we endorse and work for are generally going to be liberals of the better sort, but rarely radicals. And secondly, it will be very hard to get them in the winner's circle. In the dismal climate of the national election, voters appeared to play it safe across the board in city, county and state politics as well. As Bill Mosley observes in his overview of the District's outcome, it was business as usual. [Read complete article](#) For socialists, that label has a more concrete meaning: Democrats in their way are as much a party of business as Republicans, and the influence of moneyed classes and corporate interests grows ever stronger as the effects of the wretched Citizens United court decision extend themselves.

In Maryland, startlingly, it was business as unusual. A slack Democratic effort at the top and a collapse of turnout in Dem strongholds yielded a Republican governor, with interesting implications in a state where the General Assembly remains nominally deep blue but, yep, ensorcelled by business interests too. So even Maryland has become an explicit site of struggle. [Read complete article](#)

As Dan Adkins points out, the Republic of Northern Virginia held off the GOP tide through the kind of gerrymandering that we would view with alarm when done by Republicans (they do it well throughout the rest of the Old Dominion). But there are a few wrinkles to be noted. [Read complete article](#)

The overall conventional behavior of voters (and those who didn't) converges interestingly with the topic covered in our October Socialist Salon: the fate of Marxist and socialist practice in the post-colonial regimes of Africa. Frantz Fanon, the Afro-French psychiatrist and author of *Wretched of the Earth* (gleaned from the Algerian independence struggle), developed the insight

that real liberation, and the practice that proceeds from it, has to be *taken*, seized violently or lovingly, by the subject, rather than having it conferred on her or him. The US voter, separated by several generations from the last broad-scale struggle for the vote, appears to suffer from the uncertainty about political and social constraints (or lack of them) that comes from not having actively *taken* the form of liberation available. The inability to see one's own complicity in, and bondage by, capitalism may come from the absence of this critical step. The threat posed by the new and more subtle strategies being employed in many states to contain and reduce the votes of poor and disadvantaged people many revive this sense, one hopes.

Meanwhile, at our October membership meeting, David Schwartzman of our kindred organization Committees of Correspondence for Democratic Socialism laid out a radical vision of solutions to the looming *uber*-problem of climate change. Noting that many proposed paths to lowering carbon emissions largely tinker with the existing growth-driven global corporate-capitalist regime, Schwartzman argued instead that a proper solution must “end the rule of capital on the planet.” Andy Feeney provides a fuller account of Schwartzman's presentation and backstory. [Read complete article](#)

UPCOMING:

Nov. 20 is the Socialist Salon, a discussion of the landscape for activism in the region after the election. A guest list in formation. Probably 6:30 at Hunan Dynasty, 215 Penn. Ave. near the Capitol South metroraill, but check the [Meetup site](#) for updates.

DSA membership meeting Saturday Dec. 13 1:30 p.m. at room A-9, MLK Main Library, 901 G St. NW. The Steering Committee meets there at noon. Again, check the [Meetup site](#) for updates.

Nov. 15 *Labor Notes* magazine presents a “**troublemakers school**” for organizers and activists at Foundry UMC in the District. Details at <http://www.labornotes.org/events/2014/metro-dc-troublemakers-school>

Nov. 28, massive national Black Friday protests against Walmart. They begin in DC at 8 a.m. at Union Station; the crowd will march to Walmart on H Street. Info on the national effort at <http://blackfridayprotests.org/>

DSA NATIONAL is interested in our readers knowing about the DSA Legacy Circle. Everyone reading this, like the writer, is of course intending to live forever. But just in case... http://www.dsausa.org/bequests?utm_campaign=bequest&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dsausa

IN ADDITION TO OUR ELECTION COVERAGE, this edition features:

Cornel West, a DSA honorary chair and firebrand, had just returned from Ferguson, Mo. and official detention when he stirred an audience at Busboys and Poets with his prophetic fire. Kurt Stand brings an account of the evening. [Read complete article](#)

DCDSA's Socialist Salon in October (as noted above) explored the fate of socialism in post-colonial Africa in a discussion led by Nicole Gerber. [Read complete article](#)

This month's GOOD READS is more substantial than usual, including many excellent analyses of that late, lamented election **because you readers sent in nominations**. Keep it up, folks.

[Read complete article](#)

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.***

[A Call to Action: Cornel West's Black Prophetic Fire](#)

Monday, November 10th, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> November 2014**

By Kurt Stand

On October 14, Cornel West spoke to a capacity crowd at the 5th and K Street Busboys and Poets bringing a message of hope and determination in the struggle for justice, a struggle that has grown sharper in recent years. The occasion was publication of West's new book, *Black Prophetic Fire* – an exploration of the contemporary relevance of the legacies left by Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, Ella Baker, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X. A set of dialogues with Christa Buschendorf (a German scholar at the University of Frankfurt/Main specializing in African-American studies), the work emphasizes how these figures championed a different, alternative conception of US democracy by uniting demands for racial and economic justice.

Rejecting the caricatures and simplifications by which history remembers them, West reminds us of the prophetic tradition – the “Black Fire” referred to in the title – within the African American community, a tradition which strove for liberation from the shackles of racism by positing a vision of human liberation. Each leader he discusses, in his or her own unique way, connected the dots that link the pervasive social and personal alienation inherent in a system of racial privilege to the exploitation and violence that pervades everyday life. Thus, as they spoke out and organized against the horrors of slavery, lynching, and segregation, they sought not acceptance into an oppressive system, but rather social transformation that would make society worthy of inclusion. Whether we look at the largely forgotten Ida B. Wells, whose pioneering role documenting the scourge of lynching served as a precursor to Progressive Era muckraking, or recall DuBois, whose towering intellectual importance has been placed in a corner by anti-Communism, dominant historical narratives leave out the substance of the struggles for equality that have been at the core of political struggles throughout our history.

So too, as West emphasizes, the false narrative that sets Malcolm X and King in opposition to each other becomes a means to avoid the similarity of their critiques of the underlying structural failings of US society, becomes a mechanism to reduce social struggles to the personality of charismatic leaders. Lost in such retellings of the past is the extraordinary role of “ordinary” working people whose courage and vision is what made the civil rights movement possible. Ella Baker embraced and embodied that recognition, her leadership role in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s undervalued by society’s sexism and misunderstood by those unable to see that genuine leadership means organizing people to seize the moment themselves. Her emphasis was always and ever on grassroots activism, on making real a vision of participatory democracy – a legacy of particular importance today when people have been made to feel disempowered.

And in a juxtaposition of that legacy and today’s reality lies West’s critique – an uncompromising critique — of the Obama Administration and of those liberals and progressives, especially political and intellectual leaders in the black community, who justify the President’s actions. The presentation laid particular stress on the betrayal of the historic anti-war role of black leadership by Obama’s reliance on war – his use of drones, of assassinations, of bombings – as a legitimate tool of foreign policy. This is in contrast to DuBois who – when over 80 years old — was handcuffed and arrested because of his refusal to back down from peace activism, and it is in contrast to King – who broke with Lyndon Johnson, with the AFL-CIO, with “respectable” civil rights leaders — by denouncing the war in Vietnam, by denouncing US violence abroad in all its forms. West reminded us of the need to remember King for the radical he became, rejecting the “santaclausified” version of his convictions by media and politicians alike. King did not only condemn the war, he challenged too the belief that the US has nothing to learn from the rest of the world — the chauvinistic pretension that has rationalized the imperial foreign policy of Clinton and Obama alike.

Arrogance over the supposed moral virtues of the US vis-à-vis the rest of the world of necessity must gloss over the cruelties and hypocrisies of our criminal justice system, a connection West makes again and again. Eric Holder’s unwillingness to indict Bush Administration torturers presaged the Justice Department’s subsequent refusal to prosecute the corporate criminals responsible for the 2008 financial collapse. That collapse had a particularly devastating impact on the black community; the class bias in prosecutorial policy as in economic policy has strengthened inequality between rich and working people, and intensified the gap between black and white. West used this analysis to reinforce his point that a direct confrontation with racism is essential to overcome all forms of social and economic injustice, that failure to do the one leads to failure to do the other. He made that point too by noting that the other side of the Obama Administration’s unwillingness to prosecute law-breaking bankers has been its unwillingness to end the “war on drugs,” with its victimization of people of color, its unwillingness to end the discriminatory and inhumane practice of deportation of immigrants.

The picture painted might have been bleak. West acknowledged that he wrote *Black Prophetic Fire* out of concern that the tradition of black radicalism was being undermined by support for Obama’s politics of accommodation. His presentation, however, was given in another spirit altogether, fueled by the hopefulness of renewal in the mass protests in Ferguson. Just returned from there, where he had been arrested in a civil disobedience protest, West saw in the town’s black youth – and in the support they have received from across the country — a revival of mass

movements rooted in and growing out of the experience of the marginalized and dispossessed, breathing new winds to fan the flames of discontent, bringing forth a new vision of what society could be.

West's talk struck a chord in that capacity crowd – a crowd that he challenged by urging them to reject the easy path of acceptance and instead give content to their individual lives by seeking the harder path of challenge and commitment. He called on all to act and thereby contribute to ending the cycle of war, racism and exploitation that has defined too much of our nation's history. Absent, however, was a sense of how to bring such change into being. That, of course, was not the purpose of West's talk or his book; he sees his role in presenting a public challenge by speaking truths that too many in positions of influence refuse to acknowledge. Nonetheless, the challenge of how to turn words into deeds is one that has to be accepted. Each of the persons discussed in *Black Prophetic Fire* strove always to maintain a balance between radicalism and engagement.

The need to condemn liberal accommodation with power while also focusing fire on right-wing forces that seek to dismantle liberal values is a challenge that faced the abolitionist movement, the democratic advance of the Reconstruction years, the highly contradictory Progressivism of the turn of the century before last, and the dynamics of both the New Deal and Civil Rights struggles. This is the challenge facing DSA – West serving as one of our Honorary Chairs – as it is the challenge facing the left as a whole in all its forms. The legacy of engagement that doesn't surrender a genuine radicalism, the legacy of a radicalism based on the hopes, dreams and actions of working people, of a radicalism that builds unity by directly challenging racism and all forms of oppression is the legacy of Douglass, Wells, DuBois, Baker, King and Malcolm that West brought to light. It is a legacy to use in building the movement for peace, justice, equality and freedom, in the building of a socialist movement today.

[Global Green New Deal" Provides Focus for Oct. 11 General Meeting](#)

Monday, November 10th, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> November 2014**

By Andy Feeney

A warning that time is rapidly running out on efforts to control global climate change, coupled with hope that a Global Green New Deal to accomplish the necessary energy transition could bring about better lives for almost everyone, were two of the main messages that Dr. David Schwartzman, a professor emeritus at Howard University, delivered to the Metro DC DSA general membership meeting held on Oct. 11.

The meeting drew 14 attendees, several of whom were new to DSA. It was mostly focused on Schwartzman's somewhat abbreviated presentation of [an extensive PowerPoint](#) he has created on the climate crisis and the need for "eco-socialist revolution" to counter it.

In his presentation, Schwartzman departed significantly from the positions that many radical environmentalists have taken on the need for an end to global economic growth and total growth in human energy consumption to bring climate change under control. He argued instead that for all of humanity to achieve a "state of the art/science" quality of life now enjoyed by people in the wealthiest capitalist countries as well as Cuba, whose average expected lifespan now approaches that of the capitalist West, total energy consumption worldwide must grow from 18 terawatts or TW – i.e., 18 quadrillion watts – annually, with is its current level, to some 25 TW in the future. This would average out to a minimum of about 3.5 kilowatts per person of energy consumption per year.

However, Schwartzman argued, with adequate investments in wind power, in ever-more-efficient solar photovoltaic cells and in concentrated solar thermal power plants located in places like the Sahara Desert, "a global-scale transition can be achieved in no more than 30 years, ending with zero anthropogenic carbon emissions" – i.e. with zero emissions of carbon from human economic activities.

To achieve this goal, he said, the world would need to invest roughly 1-2 percent of our current annual energy consumption, about 85 percent of which currently comes from fossil fuels, in the development of wind and solar power sources each year. Once the necessary investments were made, however, annual energy consumption needs would drop, and timely investments in energy conservation and energy efficiency would help speed the transition.

As Schwartzman sees the shift from our current world economy – dependent on a "Military Industrial Fossil Fuel Nuclear State Terror and Surveillance Complex" or "MIC"—to a sustainable world order in which an extensive military apparatus is not required to protect western capitalism's access to fossil fuels, it would require that total energy consumption decreased in the United States and in some other highly carbon-dependent countries. At the same time, however, energy consumption – and possibly even fossil fuel consumption – would need to increase in many of the poorer nations of the world that now suffer from too little energy consumption and shorter average lifespans.

In addition to energy consumption rising in order to enable all societies to achieve state of the art living standards, additional energy consumption would be needed to clean up the pollution and other kinds of environmental damage caused by the MIC over the past several centuries, to repair infrastructure projects around the world and to establish Green Cities, Schwartzman said. Still more energy must be invested in the sequestering or removal of carbon from the atmosphere through the use of solar technologies and "agroecology" technologies such as permaculture.

The development of solar and wind energy technologies and a turn from industrial agricultural methods that are highly depended on fossil fuels to permaculture and other forms of agroecology that are environmentally sustainable will in themselves help to promote eco-socialist revolution by undermining the MIC and radically altering existing technologies, somewhat as Marx

predicted long ago in discussing the revolutionary nature of capitalist technology, Schwartzman suggested.

In addition to breaking with some forms of radical environmental thinking, however, his vision for a Global Green New Deal also departs from what some eco-socialists have written on the subject of climate change. For example, in *Monthly Review* magazine and in his book *The Ecological Rift*, eco-socialist John Bellamy Foster has repeatedly argued against the idea that “green capitalism” can bring about a transition to a sustainable economy. In his PowerPoint presentation to DSA, Schwartzman indicated that green capitalism and market forces alone will not do the job, but added the prevention of catastrophic climate *change* or C3 “must begin now!” – a fact that will require some cooperation with green capitalist entrepreneurs, or at least no attempts to block them.

The development of an eco-socialist transition to a sustainable world economy will require “multidimensional class struggle” at every level of society, from the classroom to the planet, and will require and draw on actions against every form of oppression, whether based in class or on race, ethnicity, religion, differing degrees of ability or age, Schwartzman stated. As part of that multidimensional class struggle, eco-socialists need to make “alliances, albeit temporary, with so-called green capital” to undermine and isolate the MIC complex.

Humanity has very little time remaining to launch a Global Green New Deal, the PowerPoint presentation suggested. Climate scientist James Hansen has stated that a rise of 2 degrees Centigrade above global pre-industrial average temperatures is the limit of what can occur without severe risks of triggering climate-related disasters, and most researchers agree that to achieve an average temperature rise of just 2 degrees C, the loading of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere must be brought down to no more than 350 ppm. The current level is more than 400 ppm. Studies cited in Schwartzman’s presentation have concluded that heading off truly dangerous climate change will require drastic reductions in current levels of CO2 emissions within four or five years – a goal that the nations of the earth are nowhere near to reaching as of today.

Nevertheless, Schwartzman concluded, this warning “must be coupled with hope.” The hope lies in the fact that an effective program to curb CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions could result in “a much better life for all” in the form of the Global Green New Deal, “with the capacity to deliver clean air and clean water, organic food, meaningful employment and more free creative time for all on this planet.”

A lively discussion followed, which continued somewhat past the meeting’s official closing time. Readers interested in accessing his PowerPoint can find it [here](#). Several articles by Schwartzman can be found [here](#)

[Good Reads for Socialists in November](#)

Monday, November 10th, 2014

GOOD READS FOR SOCIALISTS: NOVEMBER 2014

The Washington Socialist <> November 2014

Janet Yellen, the Fed chief, spoke at length on inequality and its remedies in a speech in Boston Oct. 17. Remedies identified included reducing the cost of higher ed or at least the unsupported cost and its effect on student debt burdens. The full text of this quite interesting and under-reported speech is at <http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/yellen20141017a.htm>

A *New York Times* account of the speech is at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/18/business/yellen-warns-of-inequality-threat.html?ref=business>

A later debate at the *NYT* on the Fed's role in remedying inequality includes Joseph Stiglitz among others: <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/10/27/what-could-the-fed-do-to-address-inequality>

Naomi Klein's new book, *This Changes Everything*, is getting plenty of traction with reviewers. Here's one from the website "Climate and Capitalism," an appropriate venue... <http://climateandcapitalism.com/2014/10/19/naomi-klein-climate-change-mass-social-movements-can-save-us/>

Here's a piece by Klein from *In These Times*, reappearing on the Bill Moyers site... <http://billmoyers.com/2014/10/14/can-climate-change-unite-left/>

Without mentioning Klein's book, Christian Parenti's article in the most recent *DISSENT* contests her notion that total political transformation – an end of capitalism — is the prerequisite and sole path to restraining climate change.

<http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/a-radical-approach-to-the-climate-crisis>

The *New York Times* review of Klein's book is by Rob Nixon: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/09/books/review/naomi-klein-this-changes-everything-review.html?smid=fb-share>

Cecilio Morales's article on worksharing in the Labor Day issue finds an echo in this piece from *The Nation*:

<http://www.thenation.com/blog/183505/work-sharing-socialist-alternative-layoffs#>

Why do diseases like Ebola hang around to torment societies again and again? Geography, capitalist practice and the color of the victims are all clearly implicated. One take on capitalism's role by Niles Williamson at the World Socialist Web Site (Fourth International):

<http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/11/01/pers-n01.html>

Prince George's County is considering a "ban the box" regulation that forbids asking a job applicant about a criminal record on the paper application. Business interests in the county are pushing back and trying to amend it, as the *WaPo* reports here:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/pr-georges-bill-would-bar-questions-about-criminal-convictions-on-job-applications/2014/10/21/6a2e8e20-58a2-11e4-8264-deed989ae9a2_story.html

The "ban the box" impulse is getting traction around the nation because it reduces incarceration and aids re-employment of returning citizens. D.C. has passed a version; this *NY Times* article shows the breadth of the movement: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/24/us/a-plan-to-cut-costs-and-crime-curb-bias-against-ex-convicts.html?ref=politics>

Sam Pizzigati's excellent newsletter from IPS on inequality, "Too Much," outlines the recent program kicked off by Oxfam called "Even It Up," a systematic path to reducing the overwhelming disparity between the very rich and the bulk of the planet's poor. Plus (in the same Nov. 3 edition), some real-estate porn...

<http://www.toomuchonline.org/tmweekly.html>

Catherine Rampell is proving to be the *WaPo*'s best opinion-page asset after Harold Meyerson. This piece on the deep injustice of the tipped labor "carve-out" in the halting march of minimum-wage activism is a good example; she might have noted that Maryland's disappointing state minimum-wage hike included a similar carve-out by craven legislators.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/catherine-rampell-tipped-workers-are-being-left-out-of-the-wage-debate/2014/11/06/0c6f41a6-65f1-11e4-9fdc-d43b053ecb4d_story.html

When the dismal election aftermath was still only a gleam in the GOP's eye, Steven Pearlstein was already skewering the Democrats for chickening out of putting their best foot forward, and why it meant they would stumble and fall. Thanks to Dave Richardson and Kurt Stand for unearthing this one...

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/10/31/democrats-only-have-themselves-to-blame-for-upcoming-losses/>

Gar Alperovitz provides a long-view assessment of the 2014 election results that suggests change is happening outside the orbit of national politics – especially in cities.

<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/27305-playing-the-long-game>

Local co-chair Jose Gutierrez points us to more election analysis, from *The Nation*, from Bill Fletcher Jr. (via the national DSA website) and a great breakdown from Rich Yesselson in *Jacobin*:

<http://m.thenation.com/blog/188185-weed-legal-capital-and-6-other-reasons-election-wasnt-total-bust>

http://www.dsausa.org/dl_a_few_quick_thoughts_on_the_november_4th_election

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/11/six-points-on-the-midterm-elections/>

Ezra Klein, from his pulpit at VOX, rags on Democrats for their excuses about the late lamented election, in the now familiar five-myths format:

<http://www.vox.com/2014/11/5/7156913/5-myths-2014>

And the unsinkable Brooke Gladstone interviewed Klein about his five-myths article in *On the Media*, the NPR show (it's on Sunday afternoons on WAMU):

<https://www.wnyc.org/radio/#/ondemand/412319>

[GOP on top tier brings challenges for Md. Democrats](#)

Monday, November 10th, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> November 2014**

By Woody Woodruff

Marylanders awoke to a strange landscape on Nov. 5 – one with a quite unexpected Republican victor in the governor's race. Larry Hogan's one-note campaign on taxes appeared to have registered with many Maryland voters, especially white working-class Democrats from outside the Democratic strongholds of Baltimore City and Prince George's and Montgomery counties.

But those voters on the Eastern Shore and in Southern and Western Maryland may have been easier to nudge, taxes aside, because the Democratic candidate, Anthony Brown, would have been the state's first African American governor. Hogan's task was also eased [because those Democratic strongholds had poor turnout](#) in the non-presidential year.

The *Baltimore Sun*'s Michael Dresser reported "In Baltimore [City], about 35,000 fewer voters turned out than four years ago — and Brown won a smaller percentage of the city vote than Gov. Martin O'Malley did then. Some 50,000 fewer people voted in Montgomery this time, and 30,000 fewer in Brown's home county of Prince George's." That roughly 115,000-vote shortfall goes a long way toward explaining Hogan's 76,000-vote margin of victory.

The tax issue is fast becoming [in urban legend] the issue that sank Brown and elected Hogan — even in the *New Yorker*, which in a gazing-from-afar piece by Kelefeh Sannah recycled some conventional wisdom, bought the GOP's anti-tax frame and concluded that Democrats have given voters "the sense that Democratic politicians don't hate taxes as much as they do."

Democrats retained their overwhelming advantage in the General Assembly, in contrast to Brown's fortunes statewide. But in a year when one-third of all delegate seats were open due to retirements or attempts at different offices, Republicans scrapped for advantage statewide and added two seats in the Senate and seven in the House of Delegates. Some ongoing progressive campaigns for legislation may be imperiled.

The champion and sponsor of the Earned Sick Leave bill, John Olszewski, tried to move up from his delegate seat in increasingly Republican Baltimore County into an open Senate seat vacated by the retirement of Sen. Norman Stone. He lost to GOP candidate Johnny Salling, and his district became solidly GOP as all three delegate seats went Republican, including of course his former seat. At least one other Democratic delegate, Mary-Dulany James of Harford County, also tried to trade up to an open Senate seat from which a Republican had retired, but also lost; the Democrats dropped from 35 of 47 to 33 of 47 seats in the upper chamber. A veto-proof majority was, however, retained, giving the Democrats a considerable lever against the new executive's power to dictate the terms of the state budget.

Jolene Ivey, a Prince George's delegate who left her seat to run for lieutenant governor, was also a strong and influential advocate for the sick leave bill, which will be introduced for the third time in the 2015 session. Advocates of the bill will be searching for new champions. Ivey was the running mate of Doug Gansler, the former attorney general who unsuccessfully challenged Brown for the Democratic gubernatorial nod.

Still, labor and social justice advocates are somewhat upbeat. One veteran top labor staffer recalled that a fighting spirit was kindled in House Speaker Mike Busch and Senate President Mike Miller by the ideological fervor of Bob Ehrlich, the last Republican governor. "We got more bills passed [in Ehrlich's four years] than with Democrats... we couldn't write bills fast enough."

Likewise, Chesapeake Climate Action Network director Mike Tidwell argued that the climate change movement in the state should greet the electoral setback by "going on offense [and] double down" on the effort, planning a campaign to statutorily increase the percentage of renewables in the state's energy mix from 20 percent to 40 percent in the next decade, as well as to keep fracking of natural gas out of Maryland. At a Sierra Club legislative briefing Saturday, Nov. 8, state activists agreed on those priorities among others, though cautious about how committee assignments might develop with so many new delegates.

Transit and smart growth activists in the D.C. suburbs are concerned about the fate of the Purple Line light rail that would connect Montgomery and Prince George's. Hogan has suggested he would rather spend the money on roads. His running mate, former federal (G.W. Bush) and Maryland (Ehrlich) cabinet minion Boyd Rutherford, [said in the lieutenant governors' candidates' one debate](#) "No Purple Line, not at this particular time I would not lose sleep if it was canceled completely, put it that way."

The Purple Line has David Alpert in "Greater Greater Washington"... "If Hogan kills the [Purple Line] project, he'll be turning down likely federal dollars that won't go to other Maryland priorities, and he'll be disappointing many voters in a much more visceral way than under Ehrlich."

He goes on to quote another activist: "David Moon, an organizer who once ran the Purple Line Now campaign and was just elected to the House of Delegates from the Silver Spring/Takoma Park area, said, 'You're not going to be able to [win Hogan over] from a regional DC-suburban perspective, or a liberal transit versus roads perspective,' or the environment (he ran against a stormwater fee calling it a "rain tax").' But if businesses are willing to stand up for infrastructure that will generate economic growth, he said, that is more compelling."

Alpert points out that Virginia's business community, though low-tax advocates, nevertheless support building new infrastructure, much of the most recent happening in a generally Republican political environment. Will Maryland's business community bring that message to Hogan? Some "businesspeople remain focused on tax rates and only tax rates as the only factor behind economic competitiveness," Alpert wrote. "But study after study has shown that millennials are not looking for the cheapest place to live; they want a desirable one (that's affordable, but usually it's scarce real estate, not taxes, that make it unaffordable)."

"Tax rates matter, but so does infrastructure. The Purple Line would boost Montgomery County, the state of Maryland, and the region. The Red Line would do the same for Baltimore. It would be short-sighted and not fiscally prudent to cancel these projects." The *WaPo*'s first editorial exhortation to Hogan, delivered only three days after the election, sounded this note. But will Hogan hear that from business allies (other than the pathetically pro-corporate *WaPo*, that is)?

The new governor's very earliest personnel moves were ominous. Lt. Gov.-elect Rutherford joins a veteran of both Bob Ehrlich and Parris Glendening transition teams, [Jim Brady](#), as Hogan's two-person transition team. Brady is not a reassuring figure either; he worked for the Democrat, Glendening, in the '90s as secretary of economic and business development but broke with the then-governor over his opposition to the wretched Inter-County Connector and became a Republican – a serious move in Maryland, where many Democrats are pro-business Republicans in spirit but stick with the dominant political culture. Brady is now a consultant and seat-warmer on corporate boards including the rapacious Constellation Energy, boding ill for environmental and alternative energy concerns during the transition and especially if he joins the administration.

A Chesapeake Climate Action Network organizer told a crowd in Greenbelt the night after the election that the next governor "doesn't believe in climate change or the science behind it."

Problems for the renewable portfolio standard upgrade, for continued resistance to fracking in Maryland, bay cleanup and the offshore wind project are likely; at the very least, any partnerships with the private sector (for instance, the offshore wind project) will likely be much more to developers' advantage than (even) under O'Malley.

Metro DC DSA steering committee member Kurt Stand in Cheverly reports "Despite the many defeats registered in the mid-term elections in Maryland, some gains were made in Prince George's County. Alongside Senator Victor Ramirez, District 47a elected former Colmar Manor Mayor Diana Fennell and longtime union activist Jimmy Tarlau as delegates; the three agreeing to work as a team. In a letter to supporters, written under the heading 'A Bittersweet Election Day,' Tarlau explained that his initial focus will be on developing a progressive caucus to last the long-haul. He added, 'I know that it will be more difficult to get things accomplished with a Republican governor, but I did not think getting progressive legislation passed and signed into law would be easy with a Democratic governor either. It will take a movement pressuring legislators to get good things passed, and encouraging more union members and other activists to run for political office. There are no shortcuts.' "

Alternative parties were active in this Maryland election. A libertarian candidate for governor polled near double digits. In Montgomery's Takoma-Silver Spring legislative district, Green Party candidate Dan Robinson polled a very respectable 9-plus percent, but trailed newcomer-winner David Moon, running as a Democrat. Green candidate Tim Willard, in a Montgomery County Council at-large race crowded with candidates including progressive stalwart Marc Elrich, was less successful at 2 percent. Tom Hucker, a former leader of Progressive Maryland and two-term delegate, tried successfully for a council seat in Montgomery.

Prince George's had only two competitive County Council races and remains business-friendly with the exceptions of Mary Lehman, an incumbent, and Danielle Glaros, who secured the seat of outgoing progressive Eric Olson, for who she was chief of staff. Deni Tavares, a protégé of Sen. Victor Ramirez, also won a council seat and arrives with progressive credentials but her future depends on her not being absorbed into the overall pro-development culture of the rest of the council.

Both of DC's suburban counties have African-American county executives who talk a progressive game but have had a hard time shaking free of the pro-development culture, as well. Rushern Baker was unopposed in Prince George's and Ike Leggett cruised easily past a Republican challenger in Montgomery. Montgomery tends to extract more concessions from their developers than does Prince George's, but a commitment to public works for public goods is – in keeping with the current age and culture – less common in either than is healthy for governance. The degree to which both jurisdictions fight for the Purple Line and other overtly public activities under a Republican governor will reveal much.

[IN MOSTLY DISMAL DC ELECTION RESULTS, SOME HOPE FOR PROGRESSIVES](#)

Monday, November 10th, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> November 2014**

By Bill Mosley

Given the outcome of the Nov. 4 DC local election that mostly affirmed the status quo, one has to look beneath the surface to find a sliver of hope for more progressive politics in DC. Nevertheless there are positive signs in a mostly bleak landscape.

Surely the results at the top of the ballot were nothing to cheer about, with Democrat Muriel Bowser cruising to victory by 19 percentage points over David Catania. Many thought Catania would at least make the race close, but in the end Bowser's identity as a Democrat and African American trumped that of the white, openly gay and Republican-turned-independent Catania. Carol Schwartz, another independent who was once Republican, didn't muster enough votes to even play spoiler. The race was full of style and mostly devoid of substance, with the sharp differences in personality between the top three candidates masking what was largely a void of distinction between their platforms. All three were largely business-friendly moderates with liberal stances on social issues. With so little on the line, Metro-DC DSA took a pass on endorsing anyone for mayor, and DC voters went with the safe choice.

The sound and fury of the mayoral race almost drowned out more interesting down-ballot contests. The most contentious was the race for at-large councilmember, with 15 candidates vying for two seats. It was foreordained that the Democrat, Anita Bonds, would win one of the seats, and she did with 24 percent of the overall vote despite her lackluster record and absence of nearly any significant endorsements (except from her fellow Democratic officeholders) or enthusiasm among voters for her. The real contest was for the second seat, one reserved for a non-Democrat. Metro-DC DSA endorsed and campaigned for two candidates running explicitly left-progressive platforms: Eugene Puryear of the Statehood Green Party and Graylan Hagler, running as an independent. Despite vigorous campaigns by both, Puryear finished sixth with 3.5 percent of the vote, and Hagler seventh with 3.0. Winning the second seat, formerly held by Catania, was Elissa Silverman, formerly a reporter for the *Washington Post* and *Washington City Paper*, with 12 percent.

Puryear's and Hagler's finishes are disappointing, but DSA members can take heart that Silverman branded herself as a progressive, albeit one who appealed more to newer (and whiter) DC residents. While Puryear and Hagler emphasized issues of greater concern to long-time and lower-income DC residents, such as affordable housing, job creation and fairness for returning citizens, Silverman ran on a good-government platform that highlighted eliminating corporate contributions to local candidates and improving transportation. Silverman captured many of the voters who were partial to Tommy Wells, outgoing councilmember and unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for mayor, who embraced the "livable, walkable" vision of DC favored by younger, upwardly mobile migrants to the city. In addition, she started her campaign with more name recognition than most of the candidates, having run in last year's special election for Council that was won by Bonds.

The fact that candidates feel the need to advertise themselves as progressives – at one point, Catania even argued he and not Bowser was the real progressive in the race – bespeaks of a DC where progressive politics matter and voters on the left need to at least be appeased, if not actively catered to. A Bowser administration, and the new Council that will work with her, will be heavily influenced by developers and other wealthy interests with business before the city. But they will go to great lengths not to appear to be in the pockets of the wealthy, and it is this fact that gives DSA and other progressive organizations a voice, if not genuine leverage. Likewise, the four Democrats who won easy election to four Council seats to represent Wards 1, 3, 5 and 6 all identify as liberal-to-progressive, though it will be the duty of real progressives to hold their feet the fire on the issues.

We also can take heart that two genuine progressive (and DSA-endorsed) candidates won easy re-election: Eleanor Holmes Norton as delegate to Congress and Phil Mendelson as chair of the DC Council. We can take somewhat less solace that Karl Racine, a partner in the corporate law firm Venable, will become the first elected DC attorney general. The DC political establishment lined up behind Racine to snuff out the candidacies of more feisty, independent-minded candidates such as labor-friendly Edward “Smitty” Smith, DC voting-rights advocate Lorie Masters and Paul Zukerberg, whose lawsuit forced the election to happen in the first place.

The overwhelming “yes” vote in the initiative to fully legalize marijuana is also a victory for social-justice advocates. Backers of the initiative framed it as a matter of racial and economic justice, given the fact that minority and low-income communities have borne the brunt of arrests and convictions for marijuana possession although its use is well-distributed among ethnicities and social classes.

There are other possibilities for liberals and progressives. With Silverman replacing Catania, the Council’s center of gravity moves just a bit to the left, given her priority of reducing the influence of corporate cash in local elections. In addition, the proposed transfer of the Reeves Center to developers as part of a deal for a new soccer stadium could get heightened scrutiny, given Bowser’s professed skepticism of the idea.

The next step is for DSA and other progressive organizations who played a role in the election to turn lemons into lemonade – to use the energy generated by the outspoken but unsuccessful Puryear and Hagler campaigns, and the clear desire among most DC voters for a government that represents the majority and not top 1 percent, to build a left political force that will capture not only hearts but enough votes for victory.

[Socialism’s development in Africa traced at Salon](#)

Monday, November 10th, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> November 2014**

By Woody Woodruff

In the heady decades when African nations shook off the colonial yoke and established indigenous rule, radical ideas struggled to get traction in an environment of big-power Cold War competition – and of reflexive resistance to those ideas, including socialism and Marxism, that Africans associated with the colonial powers.

Figures like Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere were frequently stymied in their attempts to bring a version of socialism to new nations still pummeled by extractive exploitation of resources, as DSA members heard from Nicole Gerber at the October Socialist Salon. Gerber, recently returned from Guinea, explained how deep local culture and lingering hatred of colonial influence complicated the natural flowering of radical ideas in societies newly able to seek their own paths.

Gerber outlined the varied pattern of nationalist models as one former colony after the other gained independence during the middle of the last century. Many icons of African liberation were radicals and/or socialists, and many of those had been educated in the West. But strong currents of African identity and mistrust of Western politics, theory and values complicated their attempts to fashion political structures that would work with the economic conditions of post-colonial nations.

Nationalist sensibilities were also pulled two ways, Gerber noted. What's often described as a divisive tribalism is said to have fractured national ties that were the residua of boundaries imposed by imperial powers. Gerber observed that tribal divides were often in fact economic class divides. In the opposite direction, many of the early leaders of the new nations subscribed to varying degrees to PanAfricanist ideals that asserted there would be no progress without continental unity in the face of external threats of imperialism and capitalist exploitation.

Gerber's discussion was complemented by documents she furnished on request to Salon participants. They displayed the spectrum of socialist and other ideals held by leaders of the independence era. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, for instance, got his socialism studying at Edinburgh University but was the originator of "*ujamaa*," a communitarian socialism he asserted was rooted in precolonial African social practice. "...communal ownership of land is traditional in our country-it was the concept of freehold which had been foreign to them," he said in *Essays on Socialism* (1977). Kwame Nkrumah, who led colonial Gold Coast to become Ghana, was educated in the US. He similarly cited a precolonial golden age: "We know that the traditional African society was founded on principles of egalitarianism. In its actual workings, however, it had various shortcomings. Its humanist impulse, nevertheless, is something that continues to urge us towards our all-African socialist reconstruction." Nkrumah, like Nyerere a PanAfricanist, asserted "the economic development of the continent must be planned and pursued as a whole. A loose confederation designed only for economic co-operation would not provide the necessary unity of purpose."

Patrice Lumumba was a longtime agitator for freedom of the Belgian Congo and presided briefly over national liberation, but in less than a year was ousted and then murdered by dissident forces associated with the mineral-rich secessionist region of Katanga, probably with the complicity of Western mining interests and of the US CIA. His enormous new nation, he warned, could be troubled by just such fragmenting: ““I ask you all to sink your tribal quarrels: they weaken us and may cause us to be despised abroad,” he said at his inaugural.

Sekou Toure, who was the longtime strongman of Guinea, brought socialist ideas and perhaps ideals to the liberation struggle but was called a “hardliner” by many and “hero and tyrant” by one biographer. He was for years before assuming power a labor leader and his ability to keep labor quiescent appeared important to his longevity in power, far outlasting his allies Lumumba and Nkrumah. Both Nyerere and Nkrumah resorted to suppressing labor unions later in their tenures, and the strife that caused is credited by some with their eventual loss of power. Amilcar Cabral, a theoretician of Guinea-Bissau, was also steeped in labor activism and that conditioned his influential strategic writing, where Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist, was more inclined to a Mao-like faith in peasant activism, in an Algeria where French colonists were there to stay and dominated the bourgeois and working-class culture.

Gerber’s account and the discussion that followed traced some of the crosscurrents of African liberation movements’ and leaders’ struggle to adapt socialist principles to the realities of post-colonial Africa.

The Socialist Salon, generally held at 6:30 p.m. the third Thursday of the month at a local restaurant, is an opportunity for DSA members and others to explore and share radical ideas, themes, traditions and solutions in an informal setting. Check our Meetup site.

[Virginia Holds the Line, but . . .](#)

Monday, November 10th, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> November 2014**

By Dan Adkins

The good news in the recent election is that Virginia voters did not lose any of their national Democratic representatives. They retained their three House representatives partly because gerrymandering made it difficult to lose even though the turnout was only 37 percent.

Senator Mark Warner won his dramatic election. When he ran in 2008, Warner got 65 percent of the vote as opposed to the 49 percent he got this time. The senator’s commitment to

bipartisanship and mild support of more progressive issues may not have allowed him to mobilize his base as some of his staff urged. The political environment has changed since 2008.

The electorate is focused on their lack of economic gains, and when Democrats like Sen. Warner do not seem to answer these concerns they are losing votes big time. When 63 percent of respondents in a CNN poll believe that the economy is favoring the rich, a call to bipartisanship and compromise may seem like surrender. Over 60 percent of Americans believe the minimum wage needs to be raised but there is not a national Democratic push for this. The hope for the future is that the Democratic Party must begin to take on inequality or lose more voters.

The Independent Green Party (IG) made a great show by receiving over 30,000 votes. The Libertarian Party got 47,000 votes. The IG party was influenced by the German Green Party when some military members were based in Germany. The IG may have a higher proportion of women and colonels running for office than any other party in Virginia. Its members come from all parts of the political spectrum and strongly support renewables, rail transportation, fiscally conservative budgets, energy efficiency and energy self-sufficiency. For those who wonder about a military-friendly green party, For those who wonder about a military-friendly green party, just remember that our military has been testing renewable fuels and deploying renewable installations while predicting that climate change will add to global instabilities.