

The Washington Socialist
Articles from the October 2014 Issue
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[October Newsletter: DSA's DC general election endorsements and action; climate change challenges, everyday events and post-summer activism renewal](#)

Thursday, October 2nd, 2014



Welcome to the October 2014 edition of *The Washington Socialist*, the online newsletter of the DC Metro Democratic Socialists of America.

What with all contributors still breathing hard after that doorstep [Labor Day issue](#) that you probably haven't finished reading yet, this is a terse and newsy newsletter this month, mostly about everyday stuff. Raymond Mungo, in his 1970 classic *Famous Long Ago*, called it “ped-Xing” – the grinding everyday work of activism. Most of our accounts in this newsletter are about that everyday work, those everyday events that add up to significance and change.

First, what's on the calendar for October: UPDATED (Oct. 9) below↓

Metro DC DSA's next membership meeting, Saturday, Oct. 11 at 1:30 p.m. in room A9 at the Martin Luther King Jr. main library building, features a presentation on the “Green New Deal.” David Schwartzman, a professor emeritus at Howard University, a Statehood Green Party activist and a member of Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS), will deliver a visually augmented presentation on the Green Party's “Green New Deal” proposal, with Q and A afterward. David Schwartzman is an environmental scientist and a veteran advocate for solar and renewable energy. He has published articles on Green energy in various socialist publications. The MLK branch is at 901 G St NW, Washington, DC; accessible either from Gallery Place or Metro Center Metrorail stations. Check the [Meetup site](#) for any new information on this event.

Other events:

Brian Kovalik has invited all fellow DSA members in the DC area to come over to the Lamont St Collective (1822 Lamont St NW, 20010) this Friday, October 3rd, for a **film screening and discussion of *The Internet's Own Boy***. The film starts at 7:30 p.m. The film documents Aaron Swartz's life, work, and suicide. Aaron was an internet prodigy who committed his life to the democratization of information, net neutrality, and internet freedom. Aaron tragically chose to take his own life two years into a long legal battle that would likely have lead to a jail term for him. It stemmed from his attempt to democratize JSTOR, a publicly funded but privately controlled information database that includes many scholarly publications. The discussion of the

film will be led by David Segal, the executive director of Demand Progress, an organization Aaron Swartz founded.

DC Metro DSA's first Happy Hours in Virginia kick off Thursday, October 9 at 6:30 p.m. at the [Heavy Seas Alehouse](#), 1501 Wilson Blvd., “with our brothers and sisters of DC DSA. No agenda, no schedule, no topic, just some good conversation and beer.” Heavy Seas Alehouse is a block or two from Rosslyn Metro. Parking is on the street. There is also free parking a few blocks away. RSVP on the [Meetup site](#). Organizers say “we will reserve a table whenever we have an estimated head count.”

UPDATE: The monthly Socialist Salon, Thursday, Oct. 16, features “Marxism and African Social Movements After World War II: A Group Discussion led by Nicole Gerber.

Nicole will start off this event with a 20-25 minute introduction, then open the meeting to Q and A and discussion. The event will focus on the theories of struggle, identity and national liberation proposed by Franz Fanon, Sekou Toure, Chinua Achebe and Nelson Mandela, how they attempted to implement socialist policies with an “African character” in the independence and post-independence era, and how these efforts were affected by the Cold War and neo-imperialist economic policies in the West.

The Salon meets Thursday, October 16 at 6:30 p.m. at Hunan Dynasty, 215 Penna. Ave. SE; best Metro approach is Capitol South. Updates on the [Meetup site](#) .

October's articles:

Metro DC DSA has **endorsed candidates** in November's DC General Election, and will be planning various forms of support for them. Our endorsement release [merited a mention](#) in the WaPo political blog. Bill Mosley provides a wrapup of the local's endorsements and their reasons. [Read complete article](#)

An event that definitely qualified as significant on its own was the **Climate March** in New York City Sept. 21 that drew more than 300,000 climate non-skeptics. DSA's presence there (check the national's Facebook page) was substantial, youthful and included several DC Metro DSA members. One of them was Andy Feeney, who offers a couple of observations about the overall radical presence in the march and provides some extended “good reads” evaluations of a handful of radical analyses of the climate crisis under capitalism. [Read complete article](#)

The furor over **Ferguson, Mo.** and the murder of an unarmed young African-American man in that town continues to roil observers around the country, including panelists and audience at a recent meeting at Busboys and Poets. Ingrid Goldstrom provides an account. [Read complete article](#)

DSA's relationship to the local chapter of **Jobs with Justice** continues and the organization's plan of work for the near future was outlined at its most recent meeting. Kurt Stand was there and reports. [Read complete article](#)

The excitement over Scotland's recent referendum on splitting from the United Kingdom appears to be masking more unpleasant aspects of **politics in the UK** itself, several London School of Economics professors told an audience in the District recently. Ingrid Goldstrom outlines the narrative of two parties, one ostensibly socialist, beginning to look more and more like one another. [Read complete article](#)

And there are more of our usual **"good reads"** here, including Sam Pizzigati's latest "Too Much" and news on the recent Swedish election that sounds dispiritingly like the report from the UK, above. [Read complete article.](#)

Readers' Role: *Our readers — that's 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 Medley of Socialist Approaches to Climate Crisis](#)

Wednesday, October 1st, 2014

***The Washington Socialist*<>October 2014**

By Andy Feeney

When DSA members from around the country joined the People's Climate March in New York on Sept. 21, we represented just a fraction of the socialist contingent. No doubt in part to recruit new members at the march, but also in response to the growing gravity of global climate change and emerging popular movements to stop it (or at least slow its advance), many different currents on the U.S. left have recently been addressing climate change and environmental crisis. Here are the platforms and/or statements of several groups, "ecosocialist" and otherwise, that DSA supporters should find worth considering.

"Our Planet, Our Movement," from *Against the Current*, newsletter of the Trotskyist group Solidarity. Not only the growing climate crisis, but also number of other environmental indicators show our current civilization to be unsustainable, the editors of *Against the Current* warn. Added scientific research and technological innovation is needed to head off catastrophe, yet "green capitalism" cannot provide a real solution in the end. Socialist transformation will ultimately be required. In the meantime, however, "the crisis cannot 'wait for the revolution' if we're going to avoid the collapse that could well become irreversible — according to a mounting mass of scientific evidence — within a few decades."

Arguing that “the struggles to halt environmental destruction and capitalism itself must be waged simultaneously, and inextricably,” *Against the Current* goes on to address the essential role of organized labor in the fight for sustainability as well as the painful dilemmas of workers who are currently employed by industries contributing to climate catastrophe. The statement goes on to provide electronic links to leftist activists who have proposed ways to address the economic needs of coal miners, auto workers and other employees of such anti-green industries while working to achieve the long-term solidarity needed to make climate activism successful. To access the statement, click here: <http://solidarity-us.org/site/node/4233>.

Howie Hawkins, Green Party Platform for Governor of New York. In the Sept. 21 People’s Climate March, supporters of the New York Green Party and Howie Hawkins’ campaign for governor were easy to identify from their bright green shirts, and in certain stretches along the route, there seemed to be a lot of them. Hawkins and the New York Green Party have an elaborate political platform addressing many urgent issues of importance to the left, with planks on raising the minimum wage, reinvesting in public housing, providing better mass transit for all New Yorkers, preserving net neutrality, resisting efforts to privatize public education, and many other issues besides.

In addressing environmental problems, Hawkins and the New York Greens identify several priorities, including a Green New Deal for the state, a ban on fracking and the closing of existing nuclear power plants, the achievement of a zero-carbon emissions energy system by 2030 in part through subsidies for distributed power systems and small-scale solar and wind power, a phasing out of large animal feedlots, the labeling of GMOs in food, a ban on antibiotics in animal feed, a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides that contribute to Colony Collapse among bees, and efforts to support small farmers in New York State through restrictions of corporate acquisition of farm land and economic and technical assistance for small producers. For more on the platform, click here: <http://www.howiehawkins.org/platform>.

“Building an Ecologically Sound and Socially Just Economy,” by Fred Magdoff, *Monthly Review* magazine, September 2014. Fred Magdoff, a long-time leftist with close ties to the Monthly Review school of Marxism, also is a professor emeritus of plant and soil science at the University of Vermont and has written frequently in MR on environmental topics, including the ecology of nutrient circulation within healthy soils. He is author of the Monthly Review Press book *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism*. In this article, Magdoff focuses heavily on capitalism’s addiction to exponential economic growth and the incompatibility of such growth with environmental sustainability. In a green and socially just economy, he writes, “Once socially determined basic human needs (material and non-material) are met – and after deciding how much is enough – the economy stops growing with only neutral or positive side effects for society.”

Some other principles in Magdoff’s list include creating a society of small, relatively self-sufficient communities, having workplaces and residences be closer so as to minimize transportation needs, moving towards a more bicycle-friendly society, and agricultural production “based on soil and above-ground habitat management” that makes plants better able to defend themselves against insects and disease. In Magdoff’s ideal society, “integrated animal-crop farms will be encouraged,” with farm animals treated humanely and their manure, along

with human wastes to the maximum degree feasible, being recycled back to the soil. The green society also will require shorter average work weeks, the elimination of planned waste in the economy, much greater income equality, and an education system that encourages compassion, cooperation, reciprocity and sharing, egalitarianism and a reverence for the natural world rather than their opposites. At WS press time Magdoff's article is available for free at <http://links.org.au/node/4078>.

“Change the System, not the Climate,” from the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy & Socialism. This is a 28-page booklet produced collectively by some 24 different CCDS members, with 15 pages devoted to a somewhat scholarly overview of current climate trends and a discussion of economic and technological forces driving them. Unfortunately the text is not free of typos, but the booklet is visually appealing with some striking photographs and charts. Sources cited include Bill McKibben's 350.org, NASA, the IPCC, the Royal Society of London and the International Energy Agency, along with Al Gore and Marx.

Among the recommendations in the final section of the booklet are support for a global fossil fuels divestment campaign, as endorsed by McKibben and Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, among others; a focus on green job creation, as proposed at the World Congress of the International Trade Union Confederation in May 2014; radical reductions in the U.S. military budget to free up money for investment in green jobs, and “social control of capital up to and including nationalization of the energy and finance sectors of the economy.” CCDS lists several more immediate priorities as well, including fights against tar sands oil production and natural gas fracking and the promotion of organic agriculture. The booklet briefly endorses the Green Party's “Green New Deal” also, including its call for a carbon use tax coupled with “robust” efforts to protect the incomes of working class and poor people who would otherwise be hurt by such a tax. Single copies are available for \$2.50 apiece, with cheaper rates for bulk orders, from CCDS Treasurer, 6422 Irwin Ct., Oakland, CA 94609.

“Capitalism, Socialism, and Sustainability,” by Mark Schaeffer of DSA. As posted by Mark Schaeffer to DSA activists before the Sept. 21 climate march, this outlines a possible democratic socialist approach to tackling global environmental crisis while also addressing growing economic inequality. It can be printed out as a four-page 11.5” by 8” brochure for ease of distribution to other marchers.

On one point, the DSA brochure is arguably contradictory: it quotes a warning from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. against civilizations collapsing by deciding to make necessary changes “too late,” yet in another passage it states that a socialist society can be achieved through nonviolent struggles, “continuing over generations,” to expand democratic rights, institutions, and social relations “within a mainly capitalist system.” The brochure adds, “These centuries-long struggles continue in our time on many fronts... Whether most green activists believe the fight to curb climate change can extend over “generations” and “centuries” without producing global catastrophe is unclear. The bulk of the brochure, however, outlines a number of paths to a green future that socialists can pursue immediately. Stating that “business as usual is leading toward catastrophic collapse of the natural systems that billions of people depend on for their livelihood,” Schaeffer writes that achieving a sustainable economy will require “fundamental political and social change on every scale from household to planet,” adding: “System change

can only be achieved by uniting movements for social justice, peace, and human rights as well as environmental justice and stewardship.”

Issues around which such activists can unite, the brochure indicates, include the creation of green jobs, especially through government-funded modifications to existing infrastructure; the fight for fair trade; the uprooting of environmental racism so that minority communities are not forced to be dumping grounds for toxic waste; campaigns for reproductive choice and access to family planning; fights for healthier workplaces; reductions in the working week and year; expanding and improving public transit; democratic local and regional planning; improved public education; the promotion of “diverse forms of economic democracy” including co-ops, worker-owned enterprises and community-owned agriculture; and campaigns to block fossil fuel and other hazardous technologies, including via divestment campaigns. [*Editor’s note: on Sept. 30 Schaeffer sent some updates to the DSA Activist list for inclusion in future versions. Those changes may be included in the document referenced here by the time readers see this article.*]

To access the brochure, click here: http://www.dsausa.org/capitalism_socialism_and_sustainability.

[GOOD READS FOR SOCIALISTS OCTOBER 2014](#)

Wednesday, October 1st, 2014

***The Washington Socialist*<>October 2014**

Sometimes the most interesting phenomenon is the good read that pops up in the MSM, or mainstream media as the slang puts it. Here’s an NYT piece with some punch, and a groping sense of class conflict in separatist efforts:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/19/upshot/scotland-independence-vote.html?ref=business&abt=0002&abg=1>

Sam Pizzigatti’s “Too Much” blog for IPS always amuses with a portrait of one or more greedhead moguls in his “petulant plutocrats” hall of shame. This time (Sept. 29; search for it) his “In Focus” section is headed “Why an Unequal Planet Can Never Be Green.” Read on...

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

Michael Bindner posted this on the Metro DC DSA Facebook page. It’s an excellent and accessible roundup indicating that socialist practices are related, and easily imaginable from, our everyday lives in an already mixed economy; one of the pathways to altered consciousness

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andrew-wilkes/towards-a-socialist-ameri_b_5898248.html

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Swedish voters recently dumped a right-wing government, as expected – but the news, by this account from the *International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, is not all that good, with neoliberal hegemony splitting the Swedish left.

<http://links.org.au/node/4074>

Population is a key element in both managing social provision and combating climate change. Yet, a writer for Grist observes, we talk about it last, or never. How to change that...

<http://grist.org/climate-energy/the-obvious-relationship-between-climate-and-family-planning-and-why-we-dont-talk-about-it/>

Portside, an invaluable outlet for left analysis and opinion, presents a profile of Vermont's Sen. Bernie Sanders, whose gestures toward an insurgent presidential candidacy have fired up progressives all over the map. The origin of this piece may surprise.

<http://portside.org/2014-07-14/could-socialist-senator-become-national-brand>

AND NO SOONER DID WE RELEASE THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER THAN GREAT NEW READS KEPT CASCADING DOWN... SO WE WILL KEEP UPDATING HERE...

The new economy offers the freedom to do without security in the "Freelancer Economy" — how good a deal is that? *Portside* links to a fine "Working In These Times" post...

<http://portside.org/2014-09-29/freelancer-economy-here-should-we-celebrate>

[Local Town Meeting on Ferguson, Mo. Killing Addresses Problems and Solutions](#)

Wednesday, October 1st, 2014

The Washington Socialist <> October 2014

By Ingrid Goldstrom

"We are sick and tired of being sick and tired" was a mantra of those who gathered on August 28, to mourn the loss of Michael Brown and others, and to call for *systemic/structural/institutional* change.

The Institute of the Black World 21st Century (IBW) held this national town hall meeting “Ferguson and Beyond,” cosponsored by Busboys and Poets (where the event was held), the Institute for Policy Studies and radio station WPFW. Frustration was palpable in the largely African-American, multigenerational crowd. Among the speakers were Dr. Ron Daniels, President of IBW; Barbara Arnwine, President of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights; Jasiri X, Hip Hop artist and activist; Danny Glover, actor and activist (who participated by telephone); and the very warmly welcomed Dick Gregory, comedian and activist,

Leaders of a broad coalition of civil rights groups (including, but not limited to, the National Urban League, NAACP, Rainbow Push Coalition, A. Philip Randolph Institute) issued a unified action statement of 15 steps to promote reform and stop police abuse. Among these were calls for federal investigations and reviews by the Department of Justice, specifically on the killing of the unarmed Brown, and more generally on all police killings, as well as the use of excessive force and racial profiling. They noted that closing the gap on data collections to monitor these activities is essential. They also recommended the use by police officers of Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) and dash cameras in police vehicles. Calls for community policing were also heard.

Activists of the civil rights movement in the ‘50s and ‘60s have been re-traumatized by Ferguson’s example of federal military weapons in the hands of law enforcement – the militarization of the police. Particularly painful for older civil rights activists was the fact that Brown’s body was left in the street for four hours, reminiscent of how people who were lynched were left in the streets.

Of late, there seems to be incremental progress in some places in some of these arenas; for example, the Justice Department is moving forward with some investigations and locally DC will be testing body cameras.

White DSAers need to reach out to our African American and Latino sisters and brothers about what we can do to help them achieve the goals they set forth as we all struggle for social justice. For example, in anticipation of the November 4th elections, can we help both locally and in state-wide races? One thing we can do as individuals is to be vigilant about submitting reports on police misconduct that we see.

Of course, there is a longer and more fundamental struggle at hand – confronting racism wherever it exists. Local metropolitan area DC DSA members can avail themselves of the opportunity to join others to speak openly and honestly about issues of race at the monthly Busboys and Poets A.C.T.O.R. (A Continuing Talk on Race). See their website (www.busboysandpoets.com) for more information.

[Taking Stock – Moving Forward: Jobs with Justice Steering Committee Meeting](#)

Wednesday, October 1st, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2014**

By Kurt Stand

After a summer hiatus, DC Jobs with Justice steering committee met on September 4 with a wide range of activities planned for the coming months. Activities that will build on struggles engaged in – and victories won – during the past year. And it is important to note the nature of those victories; for they speak to the core values of the coalition – justice for workers. Over the past year, JwJ played an active, leading role in the successful fight for a wage theft law. Although wage theft (forcing people to work uncompensated overtime, not paying full wages due and the like) has always been technically illegal, previously there was no mechanism to allow those cheated to claim what had been stolen from them. Another important victory was DC City Council passage of a sick leave bill; meaning workers no longer can be fired for taking time off when ill – or when their children are sick, And a third victory was won with passage of a graded minimum wage increase, to be implemented over the next few years.

Given the realities of poverty and injustice within DC, however, JwJ is looking forward to greater gains in the future. Thus although DC — alongside Montgomery and Prince George’s County – was in the vanguard of the initial successful drive to increase local minimum wage in the absence of federal action (due to Republican recalcitrance) other cities have now taken that battle further by pushing for (and in some instances) winning an increase to \$15. That number is now the local goal and a new campaign is underway to that end. So too is a campaign to include tipped employees, who labor with a minimum wage of \$2.77 per hour. Because of the strength of restaurant and hotel industries in the District, these workers have been excluded from previous gains. JwJ is supporting a Restaurant Opportunities Center initiative to launch a public campaign to ensure that workers now excluded will be included in any future increase. JwJ is also supporting the work of Respect DC, which is fighting to improve pay and working conditions of Walmart workers, focusing at the two stores recently opened in Washington. And, in addition to supporting the efforts of coalition members, JwJ will soon announce the launch of a campaign of its own focusing on hours and schedule for the ever-growing number of contingent, part-time, sub-contracted workers that are features of our local (and of the national) economy.

Two members of DSA took part in the meeting. Other organizations represented included: American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 12, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 2336, Employment Justice Center, GW Roosevelt Institute (student organization), International Socialists Organization, Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA), One DC, Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC-DC), Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 32bj, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 400, the Washington Peace Center, and Washington Teachers Union (WTU).

[The UK's parties are Tweedledum and Tweedledee](#)

Wednesday, October 1st, 2014

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2014**

By Ingrid Goldstrom

Alumni of the London School of Economics and Political Science heard a detailed update on the current state of British politics from two current LSE faculty Aug. 29.

Professors Tony Travers and Simon Hicks from the LSE Department of Government in London spoke at Washington, DC's Meridian House, saying that they believe that today there exists "little ideology" in British policies; that there is no substantive difference between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party (does this sound familiar re the Democratic and Republican parties in the US?).

Despite an economic growth rate of 3.2% per year, there is growing inequality in Britain. Yet, it is not debated whether austerity is the way forward – the Labour and Conservative parties simply differ on the question of how fast to continue in that direction.

Like DSA, the Labour Party is part of the Socialist International (SI) so this is a disappointment to DSA members.

Travers and Hicks identified three events which will have profound impact over the next three years: (1) the September 18 Scottish independence referendum; (2) the British elections in 2015 (at the moment they think the Labor Party will narrowly edge out the Conservatives); and (3) a possible 2017 referendum about British membership in the European Union.

Party loyalty has dropped sharply. In the 1950s, 97 percent of the British population identified with one of the major parties; today only 65 percent do so. This fact makes for major uncertainty in upcoming events. Of great concern is the rise and success of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) described in Wikipedia as a "[Eurosceptic right-wing political party](#)" advocating an exit from the UK's relations with the European Union and a five-year moratorium on immigration. Their policies essentially make them the British ideological equivalent of the Tea Party in the U.S. although they operate as a separate party in a parliamentary system.

One of the three major events Travers and Hicks discussed – the September 18 referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom – has since resulted in a "no" vote for independence. The professors predicted that this would be the case, as well as the very close vote. They also predict that once the older, post-World War II generation literally dies out, younger generations of Scottish voters will vote in an independent Scotland.

For now, those interested in British politics should keep a keen eye on the future, more incremental steps toward greater power for Scotland and the ripple effect this has on the UK as a whole, and to the upcoming 2015 elections and the role of UKIP as it potentially gains previously "safe" Labour seats.