

The Washington Socialist
Articles from September 2015 Issue
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Editor: Woody Woodruff

[WELCOME to the Labor Day issue of the Washington Socialist](#)

Friday, September 11th, 2015



Welcome to the Labor Day 2015 issue of the *Washington Socialist*, the monthly email newsletter of Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America.

The traditional end of summer finds us facing a really busy year, with a busier one following. Socialists are engaged in national politics in a way that we haven't been for decades, supporting a self-identified democratic socialist who is stunning the political world with his traction in the Democratic presidential primaries. Sen. Bernie Sanders is galvanizing huge crowds and slowly rinsing the socialist concept clean of the stains imposed on it by a sequence of demonizations of the Left: the Red Scare, the Cold War, McCarthyism.

That excitement is certainly crowding our calendar even more than Labor Day usually signals. **A new DSA local in Baltimore** introduces itself Sept. 20 at Red Emma's coffeehouse. See the article below. **National DSA holds its convention** rather close by, in Bolivar, Pa., Nov. 13-15. Before you make travel plans, though, put yourself forward as a delegate for Metro DC DSA. We are allotted 10 delegates and we will choose them at **our September membership meeting Sept. 13**, 2 p.m. at the MLK main library, 901 G St NW, Washington, DC 20001. You don't have to make the meeting to propose yourself as a delegate; see more info on our [Meetup page](#). There will also be time set aside at the membership meeting for canvass training for We Need Bernie, DSA's independent-expenditure arm for supporting the Sanders campaign. [See photos of our recent activity](#)

Also on the Meetup page you'll find details on our other upcoming events: The Socialist Salon Thursday, Sept. 17; **[EDIT Sept. 10 — this may be changed; see the Meetup page]** the DCDSA Happy Hour at Luna Grille Sept. 30 and book discussion group Oct. 4.

IN THIS ISSUE

IMMEDIATE/UPCOMING <> Jonathan Phipps, principal organizer for the new Baltimore DSA local (and also a much-traveled member of the Metro DC Steering Committee) provides details about the Sept. 20 kickoff event at Red Emma's, including transportation options from DC and the suburbs. [Read complete article](#). David Duhalde, DSA deputy director and manager of the new DC office, has more about the national DSA convention Nov. 13-15 in Bolivar, Pa. [Read complete article](#).

LABOR <> Kurt Stand assesses the state of things on Labor Day 2015, with the energy born of the sadness in Charleston, S.C. and the new perspectives on inequality and resistance that have come in this tumultuous year. [Read complete article](#). Carolyn Byerly analyzes the particular dangers that arise when women journalists report on injustice and criminality and how our often-immature information culture fails to support them. [Read complete article](#) Andy Feeney updates the fight against the Trans Pacific Partnership, which has moved to a new level with Obama's pyrrhic victory on fast-track authorization – and remains hopeful due to internal nationalist schisms in global capital. [Read complete article](#)

THE PLANET <> Woody Woodruff and Andy Feeney expand on a report by Friends of the Earth's Ben Schriber to the DSA member meeting in August about the woefully inadequate gestures made by various nations in advance of December's crucial Paris summit on climate change – and on what could be done instead. [Read complete article](#). Feeney, in a separate account, examines the effects of global trade on the integrity of natural systems as invasive species such as the tiny Emerald Ash Borer stand to cost Maryland and other states multiple millions of dollars just to ameliorate. [Read complete article](#). Woodruff reports on an EPI talk by James Galbraith in July; the economist was a consultant to Syriza as the radical Greek government struggled to free itself from the debt bomb imposed on it by European governments who sacrificed Greece and its workers to save their own banks. [Read complete article](#)

OUR TURF <> Bill Mosley reports on the Statehood Ambassadors, a new strategy to help tourists to the national capital understand the disenfranchisement of the residents. [Read complete article](#) Mosley also recounts a movement to persuade the ownership of the local professional football franchise that another name for the team would be much, much better. [Read complete article](#) Kurt Stand reports on the formation of a Prince George's County chapter of the activist group Progressive Maryland and the issues they will tackle, including a paid sick leave bill in the county that is coming up for consideration as early as this week. [Read complete article](#)

BOOKS/ARTS/CULTURE <> Mosley reviews *Jacksonland*, a tale of the clearing of native peoples out of the East under the profit-seeking fist of the fellow on the twenty-dollar bill. [Read complete article](#). Lynn Williamson, a member of the local's book discussion group, analyzes a current selection, Steve Fraser's *Age of Acquiescence* – an account of the First and (current) Second Gilded Ages. [Read complete article](#) Mosley also walks us through a current National Portrait Gallery exhibit on Dolores Huerta, a DSA honorary co-chair and Cesar Chavez' second in command in the formation of the United Farm Workers. [Read complete article](#) Finally, our regular feature "Good Reads for Socialists" provides links for some provocative articles you may have missed. This month, more about the Sanders campaign, of course, plus criminal justice reform, housing and gentrification, and John Oliver on DC Statehood. [Read complete article](#)

You can read these and other past articles in the *Washington Socialist* on our website where they are archived, dsadc.org

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.*

[ANNALS OF CAPITALISM- How Global Trade May Destroy the Ash Trees of Maryland](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Andy Feeney

Last summer, one of the less-noticed side effects of global capitalist trade made unwelcome headlines in Maryland. In late June the Star Democrat newspaper (based in Easton) reported that for the first time, a small and rather beautiful species of invasive insect, the emerald ash borer (EAB), had been discovered on the Eastern Shore, in Dorchester and Queen Anne's counties.

The ash borer, a native of Asia thought to have first arrived in the U.S. in wooden packaging materials in 2003, is smaller than a penny as an adult, with dark shiny green wings flecked with gold specks. By boring into the bark of ash trees and laying its eggs there, it can weaken and eventually kill affected trees. Currently the ash borer is found in 25 states, including Maryland and Virginia. According to U.S. Department of Agriculture projections, the EAB's effect on ash trees, if its spread across the country goes unchecked, could ultimately cause some \$20 billion to \$60 billion in damage to the national economy.

In the metropolitan Baltimore area alone, experts predict that the damage the insect does to ash trees could cost local residents as much as \$223 million in time. In the City of Baltimore proper, where approximately 200,000 ash trees make up about 8-10% of the tree cover, the city forester estimates that ash borer control will ultimately will cost taxpayers around \$1 million.

Along with individual homeowners with ash trees on their property, city officials hoping to eradicate the EAB or limit its effects currently face a choice of repeatedly treating trees with a chemical poison called emanectin benzoate,” at a cost of \$100 to \$400 per tree, or alternatively having smaller ash trees cut down at a cost of several hundred dollars each. Whichever path is chosen, the city forester expects Baltimore, after spending a significant sum on EAB control, will still lose a significant fraction of its ash trees.

Unfortunately, the emerald ash borer is far from the only exotic invasive species now causing significant economic damage in the wider metropolitan DC area.

Recent news stories indicate that the invasive northern snakehead fish, a voracious predator that can decimate other species of fish and devastate local populations of crustaceans and amphibians, has now become firmly established along 60 miles of the Potomac River. The highly destructive zebra mussel, a species native to the Caspian Sea, has been present in northern Maryland since 2008 and recently has been found in the northern Chesapeake Bay. Zebra mussels, which first came to the U.S. in 1986 in the ballast water of visiting cargo ships, have since caused environmental and economic havoc in parts of the Great Lakes by filtering so many nutrients out of lake water that some commercially desirable fish species can't find enough to eat.

In the Great Lakes region, the mussels also are notorious for attaching themselves in huge numbers to the water intake pipes of municipal waterworks and nuclear power plants, drastically reducing their intake capacity and forcing city governments and private corporations to spend hundreds of millions of dollars removing them. What costs the zebra mussel could ultimately inflict on Maryland are still unknown.

In addition, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Invasive Species Council list a host of other harmful invasive species and potential invasive species that threaten economic and other losses to the state. Noted examples include the kudzu vine, the gypsy moth, the invasive water weed hydrilla, the green crab, the maritime garden snail and the Japanese beetle. According to the Maryland Department of Agriculture, some 42,000 acres of hemlock forests in the northwest corner of the state are threatened by yet another invader, the tiny hemlock woolly adelgid or HWA, a native of Asia that first came to North America in the 1920s and to Maryland in the 1980s.

Another invasive species with its origins in the United States west of the Appalachians, the rusty crayfish, was probably first brought to Maryland as fish bait. It has been present in the Susquehanna River basin in northern Maryland since 2007: according to the Department of Agriculture, and is "infamous for overrunning freshwater streams and lakes," where it can have "devastating effect on native crayfishes, aquatic vegetation, fishes, and other stream species."

The European pine shoot beetle, a brown or black insect with a cylindrical body that is about as big as a match head as an adult, can cause "serious decline of entire stands of trees" by eating young pine shoots and laying its eggs in them, according to Maryland authorities. It was first introduced into the U.S. in 1992 and now exists in 17 states, including Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

What almost all of these destructive organisms have in common, although the commercial media rarely mention it, is that their expansion into new and unfamiliar environments where they escape control by natural predators has been heavily dependent on the progress of capitalist trade, capitalist investment, and capitalist transportation technologies.

Capitalist society, as professional biologists recognize, did not itself invent the problem of invasive species. The process of plant and animal species evolving in particular geographical areas and then migrating into different ones, where a few of them explode in numbers and disrupt the environment, probably has been going on for millennia. It may have begun shortly after the super-continent of Pangaea began breaking up into separate continents and islands some 240 million years ago, thus fostering the evolution of new plant and animal species in ecosystems newly isolated from each other. Through subsequent migrations of seeds, spores and adult organisms facilitated by wind, water and other mechanisms, some species may have been gradually working to reconnect the world's disconnected land masses ever since.

With the evolution of more or less modern humans over the last 400,000 years or so, and the migration of our distant ancestors out of Africa to the far corners of the planet over many thousands of years, the migration of disruptive non-human species into new areas probably accelerated. Environmentalist Chris Bright, in his 1998 book *Life Out of Bounds: Bioinvasion in a Borderless World*, notes that "Nearly everywhere, invasion [of unfamiliar environments by exotic organisms] has been, in varying degrees ... a standard feature of the human past." But the development of modern capitalism since the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance has super-charged the process, Bright indicates, making the process of species transfer and ecological disruption much faster than before, and far more common.

As Bright puts it, "Biotic mixing on a global level began in earnest general five centuries ago, as the Age of Discovery dawned. It is reaching its logical extreme today, in the emergence of a global economy. At its current level ... bioinvasion has become another way of measuring the unsustainability of the contemporary economic order."

Five centuries ago is roughly when Columbus "discovered" the Americas and initiated the European (initially, just the Spanish) colonization of the New World. It is also roughly when the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama found a sea route from Western Europe southward around the tip of Africa into the Indian Ocean, and from there northward to the Indian port of Surat, in a voyage that became the foundation for Portugal's establishment of a commercial empire in Africa and Asia.

In the view of many economic historians, including Adam Smith in his classic work *The Wealth of Nations*, the evolution of modern capitalism out of the vigorous commercial society of the European Renaissance took a big leap forward due to the discoveries of Columbus and da Gama and other European explorers. Smith wrote that the two explorers, by forging new trading links among Europe, Asia and the Americas, together laid the foundations for a truly global economy that, by fostering a more advanced division of labor and creating new export markets for surplus goods of both West and East, would vastly improve average labor productivity on a global scale, thus making possible eventual prosperity for all.

More critical observers have noted that the Age of Discovery was soon followed by the establishment of large European empires, the flourishing of the brutal Atlantic slave trade and the creation of new plantation-based economies in the New World that relied extensively on imported slave labor and that of white indentured servants. For generations, socialists and other progressives have been lamenting the horrifying human costs of these developments.

Yet as Bright's *Life Out of Bounds* indicates, and as environmental historian Alfred Crosby also wrote in *Ecological Imperialism*, the rise and fall of large European empires and the continuing evolution of a world market since the Age of Discovery have had striking ecological impacts, not just human ones.

In colonizing the Americas, the Spanish conquistadores and later European intruders also introduced into new American environments such species as European rabbits, rats, cats, dogs, goats, sheep, cattle, horses, pigs, honeybees and clover, among other disruptive invasive organisms ranging from dandelions and stinging nettles to Old World peach trees, wild oats, and mustard. Upon arriving in the Americas, these and other newcomers quickly displaced many established plant and animal species.

European colonists, both by bringing their own Old World diseases to the New World and by importing slaves to the Americas from malaria-infested areas of Africa, also accidentally insured that Old World diseases fatal to humans would arrive.

Without denying or excusing the violence, greed and cruelty of the early conquistadores, Crosby and Bright argue that it was mostly Old World diseases that triggered a catastrophic decline in the indigenous populations of North and South America in the first century following the Spanish conquests. In this brief period, Bright states, "as many as two thirds of the western hemisphere's native inhabitants – perhaps 30 million people – may have succumbed to smallpox, malaria and other Old World diseases."

The smallpox virus had long been present in the Old World, Crosby notes in *Ecological Imperialism*, but for some reason smallpox epidemics only reached crisis proportions in Europe over approximately three centuries from the 1500s through the mid-1700s. However, while the disease was a great killer of children, European adults living in ports where they experienced repeated exposures were relatively resistant to it. As colonial expansion occurred, however, European sailors inadvertently carried the disease to people in the Americas who were not resistant. The result was demographic disaster.

From its 1519 arrival in the Caribbean through the start of the twentieth century, Crosby writes, smallpox "played as essential a role in the advance of white imperialism overseas as gunpowder." Accidentally introduced into Mexico in the early 1500s, ahead of the conquest of Tenochtitlan by Cortes, "the disease exterminated a large fraction of the Aztecs and cleared a path for ... the founding of New Spain." In Peru, similarly, the virus caused severe population losses and spread chaos and civil war in the Incan Empire before the arrival of Francisco Pizarro, so that his apparently miraculous victories over the Incas were "in large part" the triumphs of smallpox.

Crosby argues further that smallpox infections also spread very rapidly to other densely occupied parts of the Amerindian New World, possibly ranging "from the Great Lakes to the pampa [in Argentina]" by 1530. He hypothesizes that it was smallpox, again, that devastated the complex civilization of the Mound Builders in the present-day U.S. by 1540.

At the same time European explorers and conquerors were both deliberately and accidentally introducing Old World organisms into the New World, there was a large flow of organisms native to the New World in the opposite direction. Such plants as “Indian corn” or maize, tobacco, potatoes, tomatoes, bell peppers, chocolate, and eventually Brazilian rubber and quinine are among the prime examples.

Basically capitalist trade under colonial auspices also resulted in Europeans establishing sugar cane, coffee and tobacco plantations in the Caribbean and Latin America, while importing significant volumes of silver, gold, seal furs, beaver furs, whale oil, timber and codfish from the Americas. Colonial trade over the next few centuries also dealt in ivory, slaves, ostrich feathers, dye woods and other products from Africa; in jute, indigo, spices and cotton calicoes from India; in cloves and other spices from what is now Indonesia, and in tea, silk and porcelain from China.

Far more so than any other period of similar length in history, therefore, the past 500 years since Columbus’s voyage have featured an enormous global remixing of plant and animal species previously separated by geological forces and geographic isolation.

For the first several centuries following the Age of Discovery, this remixing was carried out largely by what was then the world’s most advanced long-distance transportation technologies, ocean-going wooden sailing vessels whose design, average speeds and cargo capacities steadily improved over time thanks to the ingenuity of European ship builders. Such ships, whose wooden hulls were vulnerable to burrowing insects and marine organisms, and which carried loads of rocks, dirt and other heavy materials as ballast, were themselves efficient carriers of weed seeds, microbes, and rats and mice into new environments. However, they were relatively slow by modern standards and hence formed a barrier to the global transmission of fast-developing diseases and other organisms incapable of surviving extended ocean voyages.

Since the development of the steam ship and the railway locomotive during the English Industrial Revolution, however, capitalist transportation technologies have radically improved in terms of speed and cargo-carrying capacity. Today, seeds of invasive weeds and adults and egg cases of invasive insects can travel hundreds of miles almost overnight by hitchhiking rides on passing automobiles, long-distance trucks and railroad cars. Human disease organisms like the Ebola virus, the cholera bacteria and the SARS virus can travel thousands of miles by jet airliner, in many cases before their victims begin to display symptoms.

Modern cargo ships and oil tankers made of metal no longer transmit barnacles, insects, weed seeds and other hitchhiker organisms in their hulls as readily as wooden vessels once did, Bright notes. But at the same time, the cargo holds of modern commercial and naval vessels are much larger than those of the old wooden sailing ships, which means they have more room for hitchhiker species, particular those hidden away inside sealed freight containers.

Bright comments: “Containers are nearly ubiquitous; they move by ship, rail, and road. They can be stacked for weeks or even months in ports or railyards, allowing plenty of time for pests to enter. They offer a safe haven to anything that manages to get inside, since they are very difficult to inspect. They are rarely cleaned between shipments, and they may not be unpacked until they are hundreds of miles from their ports of entry.”

Accordingly, Bright reports that shipping containers have been identified as “significant pathways for insects, weed seeds, slugs, and snails.” Their deadliest and most notorious hitchhiker species to date, though, may be the Asian tiger mosquito, a major carrier of Dengue fever and at least 17 other vector-borne diseases, including different kinds of encephalitis and yellow fever. Before the mid-1980s the mosquito was already common throughout much of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean region stretching from Madagascar to Hawaii, but in the 1980s it then went on what Bright calls a voyage of “world conquest” by riding to new environments in shipping containers holding used rubber tires. By the time Bright’s book appeared in 1998, it had established itself in such new environments as southern Europe, South Africa, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia, Brazil, and the southeastern U.S.

Unlike wooden sailing ships that used rocks, dirt and other materials for ballast, modern tankers have huge ballast tanks that take in seawater when more weight is needed for stability, such as when a ship is unloading. The ballast tanks then release this water when the ships need to shed weight, such as when they are loading fuel or cargo. Accordingly, ballast tanks have now become major transmitters of hitchhiker organisms.

As Bright reports, “the ballast capacity of a big tanker can exceed 200,000 cubic meters – enough to fill 2,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.” Accordingly, modern commercial tankers can move enormous volumes of invasive organisms into unfamiliar environments through the uptake and discharge of ballast water. The world’s merchant marine fleet, which by the late 1990s was covering some 20,500 “ton miles” annually in terms of freight voyages, thus has created a series of “meta-currents” in the oceans rivalling the natural ones, Bright argues. On any day taken at random, Bright believes these meta-currents carry “perhaps” 3,000 different species of hitchhiker organisms, ranging from pathogenic microbes and green plants to carnivores and scavengers.

The zebra mussel is one of the most notorious invasive species transported via ballast water. Others, Bright reports, include a North American bristle worm now well established on the Baltic Sea coast of Poland; a North American jellyfish called Leidy’s comb jelly, which has “devastated” the fisheries of the Black Sea; a starfish from the coasts of the Northwestern U.S. that has threatened local shellfish industries off the coasts of Tasmania; and poisonous dinoflagellate or “red tide” plankton from Japan that now sometimes shut down oyster production in parts of Australia.

In addition to the spread of harmful invasive species being accelerated by the modern shipping industry, the passenger airline business and the global tourism industry, Bright reports, the problem of “bioinvasion” also is promoted by commercial timber plantations, both in the temperate zone and the tropics; by global commerce in exotic pets and horticultural products; and by commercial shrimp farming in many locales.

It also is encouraged by modern industrial-style agriculture, which in many ways is inherently dependent on exotic and artificially “invasive” species such as Old World varieties of wheat, hybrid and genetically engineered varieties of New World maize, and a rather limited selection of rice, oats and other grains. The fact that most commercial crop species are grown in

monocultures, in huge fields of genetically identical organisms, makes them unusually vulnerable to predation by insects and competition from various weeds.

The industrial use of DDT and other chemical pesticides over the past two generations to kill pest species in agriculture has resulted in many of them evolving natural abilities to resist the pesticide, Bright indicates. For this and other reasons, the total number of pest species affecting global agriculture is growing, not shrinking. Writing in 1998, Bright noted that “Some 70,000 pest species are already attacking crops, but new ones are entering the system all the time and it is never certain where they will end up.” This makes industrial scale agriculture, too, a major force promoting bioinvasions.

“As ecological entities,” Bright concludes, “the continents are coming together again; the seas are spilling into one another ... Modern commerce is wrapping the world’s natural systems in a web of connections that is far more comprehensive than anything that could have existed on the ancient super-continent. A kind of hyper-Pangaea is emerging.” This “effective collapse of the world’s ecological barriers is a phenomenon,” he adds, that is “so far as we know, without precedent in the entire history of life.”

What this global phenomenon means for the future of Maryland communities already affected by the emerald ash borer, the zebra mussel and other invasive species is not clear. The local economic damage that invasive species causes to Marylanders so far seem serious, but hardly overwhelming. But Bright concludes that on a worldwide scale, and at its current accelerated pace, the process of bioinvasion “is no more sustainable than are current levels of deforestation or atmospheric carbon emissions,” primarily because of the damage bioinvasions do to biological diversity. To use a badly mangled metaphor, therefore, Baltimore’s expenses for emerald ash borer control may resemble the proverbial canaries that miners used to carry to detect dangerous methane levels in coal mines. Whatever damage the EAB inflicts on the ash trees of Baltimore is likely just a harbinger of other invasive species problems yet to come, social and public costs yet to be determined.

[BACK IN CHARM CITY: Baltimore DSA Launches Sept. 20](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Jonathan Phipps

Come join us Sunday, Sept. 20 at 2 p.m. for an open house and kickoff event for the Baltimore chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Be a part of an interactive presentation designed to portray, shape, and frame the role and function of the DSA within the city of Baltimore for years to come. Learn how you can be a part of positively changing the social and political reality not only within the city of Baltimore, but within American society as a whole.

The event is at [Red Emma's](#) — bookstore, coffee house and home to radical civic engagement since 2002. At 30 W. North Avenue, it's just a [four-block walk from Baltimore Penn Station](#), accessible ([even on Sunday](#)) by MARC train from DC and the Maryland suburbs.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is the largest socialist organization in the United States, and the principal U.S. affiliate of the Socialist International. We are activists committed to democracy as not simply one of our political values but our means of restructuring society. Our vision is of a society in which people have a real voice in the choices and relationships that affect the entirety of our lives.

Baltimore is a vibrant and dynamic city that, due to recent events, is in the midst of a crossroads culturally, socially, politically, and economically. The DSA hopes to ensure that the path taken from these crossroads is one conducive to and even influenced by democratic socialism and its advantages.

Come learn about Democratic Socialism and the DSA, and how you can be a part of changing Baltimore and America for the betterment of all working people.

For people traveling by MARC:

1. Take the Penn Line to Baltimore Penn Station.
2. Upon exiting the station take either St. Paul Street or N Charles Street three blocks north.
3. Make a right or left turn onto North Ave.
4. Arrive at "Red Emma's," 30 W. North Ave.

[DC STATEHOOD- "Ambassadors" to Spread Message of Disenfranchised](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Bill Mosley

Beginning this autumn, specially trained volunteers will reach out to visitors to the District of Columbia to educate them about how citizens living in the nation's capital – with all of this shrines and monuments to democracy and freedom – are denied the basic citizenship rights that residents of all 50 states enjoy.

The Stand Up! for Democracy in DC Coalition, a nonprofit organization that conducts public education in support of the goal of DC statehood, will send statehood "Ambassadors" around the

District – to tourist sites, national conferences, marches and rallies, and other locations to spread the word about the lack of democracy here and why DC statehood is the solution.

The “Ambassadors” project, supported by a DC government grant, will build on a survey of visitors to DC conducted two years ago by Stand Up! That survey (conducted by volunteers, including members of Metro-DC DSA) found that most people were unaware that the District lacked voting representation in Congress and control over its own budgets and laws, and that when informed about this lack of democracy, 73 percent of respondents supported statehood for the District.

Ambassadors will attend a brief training session and given guidance on how and where to spread the statehood message. Members and friends of Metro-DC DSA interested in serving as Ambassadors should contact Bill Mosley at billmosley@comcast.net.

[DOLORES HUERTA - Her Life and Work Celebrated in Smithsonian Exhibit](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Bill Mosley

Dolores Huerta is best known as a labor leader – a co-founder, with Cesar Chavez, of the United Farm Workers union – but her life and work took place at the intersection of several of the critical movements of the 20th century. In addition to her labor organizing, Huerta made substantial contributions to the movements for Latino/Latina rights and for women’s empowerment, as an exhibition at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery makes clear.

“[One Life: Dolores Huerta](#)” is a small exhibit – its approximately three dozen photos and artifacts fit neatly into one modest-sized gallery – but it is rich in images and memorabilia that tell the story of one of the significant labor leaders of our time. The earliest photo is of a seven-year-old Huerta with her brother in California, and the exhibit traces her life through her being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama in 2012. The medal itself is displayed next to a photo of the president awarding the medal to Huerta, who is smiling like one of life’s winners.

She has a right to smile, for over her 85 years Huerta – who is an honorary chair of Democratic Socialists of America – fought and overcame obstacles one by one. She rose from an impoverished childhood in rural California to become a co-founder of the Community Services Organization, one of the earliest Mexican-American self-help organizations. It was through the CSO that she became acquainted with Chavez, and the two founded the National Farm Workers Association – the predecessor to UFW – in 1962. Chavez initially discouraged Huerta from playing such a large role over concern that her domestic responsibilities – she was at this point

divorced with two daughters – would distract her from union duties. Huerta, however, was not deterred. In the photos from these years her expression is determined and focused, including a shot of the founding convention of NFWA in which men cluster around Huerta to sign up for the union.

In the NFWA and later the UFW, the charismatic Chavez was the spokesman and public face of the union, while Huerta handled public relations and other organizational duties. But she sometimes stepped into the spotlight, where she often spoke to female workers – as she is pictured in the exhibit – and served as a special inspiration to women seeking, like Huerta, to balance activism and family. She also was a fierce negotiator at the bargaining table, leading one grape grower to grouse, “Dolores Huerta is crazy. She is a violent woman, where women, especially Mexican women, are usually peaceful and calm.”

The exhibit doesn’t hide the difficulty and danger Huerta faced as a labor activist. She often lived hand-to-mouth and relied on donations of food and clothing from union members. One member knitted her a sweater emblazoned with the UFW “black eagle,” and the exhibit features both a photo of her wearing the sweater, and the sweater itself. A 1988 photo shows a grim-looking Huerta in the hospital, Chavez by her side, after she was beaten by San Francisco police during a demonstration and suffered a ruptured spleen and fractured ribs. She was eventually awarded an \$825,000 settlement, and the incident led the San Francisco police to revamp their crowd-control procedures.

But there also are images of triumph, including the events leading to UFW’s successfully achieving a contract with California grape growers in 1970. While Chavez embarked on a 25-day hunger strike in 1968 to dramatize the farm workers’ plight, Huerta worked the media and the political establishment. Two photos in the gallery show Huerta with Robert Kennedy as Chavez ended his fast.

A silkscreen portrait of Huerta by Barbara Carrasco captures its subject’s essence: kindly yet firm, visionary yet down-to-earth. Or perhaps Huerta’s own words, printed on the gallery wall, capture her best: “Don’t be a marshmallow. Walk the street with us into history. Get off the sidewalk. Work for justice.”

“One Life: Dolores Huerta” will be at the National Portrait Gallery until May 15, 2016.

[FORWARD TOGETHER FOR DAYS OF GRACE: A Long March for Justice Continues](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Kurt Stand

Labor Day has sometimes been a militant demonstration in solidarity with striking workers, sometimes used to proclaim the beneficence of corporate capital. At times a vehicle for expressions of independent worker political action, more often it has been a tool for mainstream politicians to talk without substance about popular need. Occasionally used to express opposition to war, commonly it is turned into a holiday to celebrate “Americanism.” Frequently a fun parade or time for a family outing, the holiday’s history thus ignored, the day marking the transition from summer to autumn with back-to-school sales, and final seasonal trips to the beach. Or, in other words, Labor Day reflects the changing trends in US society and attitudes amongst union members. So it is little wonder that this year the holiday has become an opportunity to forcefully and publicly connect demands for economic, social and racial justice – to assert workers’ voice in the fight to give meaning to a democratic system under assault from all sides.

Just such a connection is being made by Local 1442 of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) which issued a call for a Labor Day action in its home city of Charleston, South Carolina in response to the mass shooting of parishioners at the “Mother Emanuel” AME Church in June and the police slaying of Walter Scott in April. The call states in part:

Guns inflicted the fatal wounds of April and June, but racism, poverty and the politics of rancor and discord have long inflicted grave wounds on the state’s poor and most vulnerable people. This Labor Day weekend, people of faith and conscience will come together in Charleston to remember our fallen friends and to reflect on the racism and hatred that lay at the root of their deaths, as well as the violence that tears away at the fabric of our communities.

Specifically, the gathering will call for an end to racist violence and the transformation of our commemorative landscape – our monuments, markers and historic sites — to fully reflect South Carolina’s traditions of diversity and democracy. We will also come together to honor Clementa Pinckney and to affirm the moral principles that he stood for as pastor and public servant. These include:

- An end to discriminatory policing
- Expanded voting rights
- A living wage and collective bargaining rights for all working people
- Affordable healthcare and Medicaid expansion
- Quality education as a basic human right
- An end to gun violence. . . .

If you believe that an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, and if you understand that what happened at Emanuel AME has implications far beyond Charleston, and if you believe that we can build a movement together to save South Carolina’s soul and the soul of the nation, then join us as we proclaim “Forward Together, Not One Step Back.”

“Forward together” is the watchword of the movement that emerged in North Carolina in 2013 after that state’s legislature used the Supreme Court’s elimination of key enforcement provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act to pass one of the most restrictive voting laws in the country. Such restrictions disproved the argument that federal voting rights protections were not

necessary –but of course, the local power structures that sought their elimination knew that full well. Moral Monday demonstrations, organized by the NAACP in alliance with a host of labor, civil rights, women’s, student, faith-based and other organizations have taken place weekly since then throughout the state. Currently, the NAACP and its allies are in the midst of an 860-mile national march. Begun August 1 in Selma, Alabama and now in North Carolina where marchers will rally and demonstrate up through Labor Day. They will then continue until they reach the Halls of Congress in Washington DC on September 16. This “Journey for Justice” is advocating the following:

the right of every American to a fair criminal justice system

uncorrupted and unfettered access to the ballot box

sustainable jobs with a living wage

equitable public education

Demands that are similar to those in Charleston because the needs of working people in North Carolina, South Carolina, and across the nation are similar. And, although expressing the needs of the present, they also draw on the history of movements to defend democracy by fighting racism and exploitation. One of the initiators and principal leaders of the Moral Monday movement, Rev. William Barbour of the NAACP, in a tribute to Julian Bond, spoke of today’s struggles as a continuation of those in the past. Noting that the first Reconstruction – begun during the Civil War and buried with the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case which allowed for the legal apartheid Jim Crow system of segregation, and the Second Reconstruction – begun when activists took to the streets to make real the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. That ruling undid the legal basis for such segregation but was then buried under the weight of the racist “Southern Strategy” of George Wallace and Richard Nixon. It left tasks unfinished – and so created the need for a Third Reconstruction; Barbour reminds of what that legacy consists:

When Black soldiers came home from Vietnam describing the atrocities they had seen the U.S. commit against the tiny country’s non-white peasants, it was not long for Julian and SNCC to begin protesting these atrocities. Soon the Georgia Legislature, dripping with the money being spent by the U.S. military across Georgia, decided Bond’s truth-telling could not be tolerated in the legislature and ejected him from his hard-won seat. Without skipping a beat, Julian and SNCC took the attack on him as an opportunity for turning the southern U.S. anti-racism movement into a southern hemisphere movement against the racist policies of the U.S. and European nations toward native, non-whites. ...

Americans are the targets of a conscious dumbing down by tea party extremists, who are dependent on their twisted versions of world events and history. Their cruel policies would be immediately rejected if our kids were taught accurate history in our public schools. This problem led to Julian’s full support of the *Eyes on the Prize* film. ...

Brother Bond, in 1998, was persuaded to lead 64 civil rights veterans who sit on the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Julian Bond never let us down in our efforts in North Carolina to revive SNCC's strategy of non-violent direct action from the moral high ground. He gave us confidence to experiment with different ways to welcome our Brown and White sisters and brothers to the central struggle against racism. ...

Now, Brother Julian, you get a well-deserved rest. ... You will be present within us as we walk in the NAACP's *Journey for Justice* through North Carolina on the way to D.C. to demand a comprehensive Voting Rights Act, that five Justices—liquidating history—eviscerated a couple of years ago. As the Journey passes ALEC's offices in Northern Virginia, a factory of poisonous boiler-plates of cruel laws for southern states to pass against the poor, disenfranchised, poorly schooled, LGBTQ, labor, immigrants, women, and every group of people excluded from accumulating capital in the avaricious economic-political system that is playing its trump card once again, you will be with us. We can hear you saying from the clouds: AMERICA. Shuffle the letters and you get: I AM RACE.

The history of the Civil Rights movement is not a history of constant advance, of constant victory. Defeats came often, because the strength of the existing power structure made it hard to maintain unity, made it difficult to determine when to compromise, when to stand firm, how to build coalitions. Yet it is a history filled with real victories from which people can learn – as the Journey for Justice and the Call for Grace each reflect. Significant in both is the central role labor unions are playing, a role they have not always played.

In the late 19th, early 20th centuries, many unions in the South wanted to drive blacks out of the work force, and most accommodated themselves to the privileged side of disunity once segregation became the law of the land. But there was ever and again resistance to such a world. African American longshore workers in the turn of the century created the basis of for a united black and white union within the AFL in New Orleans at the height of the era of lynching and repression. Yet though striving for unity, they refused to be silent about their own dignity – and so when, in 1902, the Central Labor Council organized a whites only Labor Day, a Black Labor Day parade was also organized for a number of years. Meanwhile, any cracks in the wall of exclusion were seized upon, as when the New Orleans building trades held a joint black-white Labor Day parade in 1910, and when the Socialist Party organized a mass rally of black and white workers on behalf of the McNamara Brothers (arrested in 1911 for using dynamite during a California strike). The interracial ILA – apart from the miners unions, the only such AFL union at the time in the deep South — survived numerous conflicts and attempts to break its unity and strength up until the Depression. Later in the 1930s, Communists and other radical leftists in the National Maritime Union insisted on integrated union hiring halls throughout the country, where it was unpopular and where it was illegal to do so, and fought off police, vigilantes, gangsters and employers to uphold the practice. Although the unity in struggle suffered a setback during the early years of McCarthyism and the Cold War, the labor/civil rights nexus gained a new lease on life during the Second Reconstruction Rev. Barbour spoke about – as witnessed in Charleston itself after a successful three month strike led by Local 1199 organized the city's hospital workers in 1969.

All this forms the background to the militancy of Kenneth Riley and his fellow dockworkers, despite conservative times and a conservative national union. In 2001, when challenging the lack of democracy in the ILA, and its related neglect of the interests of black workers because the union refused to confront the threats posed by global capital, Local 1422 members protested non-union work performed on the Charleston waterfront. Provocations led to picket line battles with the police – and the arrest of Riley and 4 other dock workers. A solidarity campaign ensued, the 5 were eventually cleared of all charges. Riley went on to become president of the Local, an International Vice President of the ILA, and still a fighter for union democracy and union defense of workers’ rights on and off the job. It is this background that led to the call for action after the murder of nine church goers.

But the Labor Day rally is not only a call for abstract ideological reason. One of the local’s 800 members lost a son and an aunt in the massacre at Emanuel A.M.E. Another member is the brother of Walter Scott, the Black motorist who was shot in the back by a North Charleston policeman April 4. It is that reality which all labor should remember this Labor Day and all days thereafter, while heeding Riley’s words to an ILA national convention:

We cannot simply mourn the dead and talk about reform – we must act and these Days of Grace is a powerful demonstration of action.

Action that returns meaning to Labor Day by organizing to end the “racism and hatred ... the violence that tears away at the fabric of our communities.

Quotes:

ILA Local 1442:

Charleston’s Days of Grace Call to Action — <http://www.daysofgracecharleston.org/>

America’s Journey for Justice List of Demands:

North Carolina NAACP — http://www.naacpnc.org/journey_about

Rev. William Barber on Julian Bond:

http://www.naacpnc.org/?utm_campaign=stmt_julianb02&utm_medium=email&utm_source=naacpnc

Ken Riley::

ILA News, August 12, 2015 — <http://www.ilaunion.org/ila-local-1422-organizing-labor-day-weekend-charlestons-days-of-grace-loves-work-is-justice/>

Other sources:

More than a Flag: South Carolina Dockers Push Racial Justice Further, by Jane Slaughter, **Labor Notes**, August 20, 2015

<http://www.ilaunion.org/ila-local-1422-organizing-labor-day-weekend-charlestons-days-of-grace-loves-work-is-justice/>

Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class and Politics 1863-1932 by Eric Arnesen (1994)

Forward Together: A Moral Message for the Nation by Rev. William Barber (2014)

On the Global Waterfront: The Fight to Free the Charleston 5 by Suzan Erem and E. Paul Durrenberger (2008)

[GOOD READS FOR SOCIALISTS- A roundup of recent articles in print or online](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

As the Sanders campaign settles into a niche in the presidential race, plenty of critiques of Sanders's proposed program have emerged.

Bob Kuttner in The American Prospect has one: <http://billmoyers.com/2015/07/22/why-liberals-have-to-be-radicals/>

Jesse A. Myerson, who's contributed to *Rolling Stone* and *Salon*, similarly asks <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/why-doesnt-bernie-sanders-run-on-a-truly-socialist-platform-20150722>. His discussion of the "non-reformist reform" of government-guaranteed employment as a "last resort" is provocative. Myerson is scoffed at – by a [foam-flecked right winger](#) at the snarksite *MRC Newsbusters* – as a journalist manqué and Occupy Wall Street refugee, a screed included here for your amusement...

More Bernie... here he has an interview with Ezra Klein of *Vox*:

<http://www.vox.com/2015/7/28/9014491/bernie-sanders-vox-conversation>

Here is a mid-August piece from the *Guardian* by Syreeta McFadden with a close look at the interaction between race and class as illuminated by the Sanders campaign and Black Lives Matter. “Racism and capitalism are fire and air. They cannot exist without the other. Social democrats may ideologically align with black issues and causes on the surface but they feel loath to apply a critical analysis of racism on the same footing as their class one.”

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/14/bernie-sanders-must-take-race-seriously-black-lives-matter?CMP=ema_565

In that vein, DSAer Kurt Stand sends along “a few good reads suggestions:

“This article (which was on Portside) we should definitely highlight:

<http://mic.com/articles/124427/cornel-west-talks-about-endorsing-bernie-sanders-black-lives-matter-and-donald-trump#>

This article from Jacobin about Katrina is also good on Charter schools and is interesting on some of the contradictions in Black Lives Matter...”

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/hurricane-katrina-ten-year-anniversary-charter-schools/>

Bernie is getting credit for moving the Dem discourse (and aspirants) leftward. Who/what else is moving to (or at least finding itself on) the left? Nelson Lichtenstein in the latest *Dissent* says it’s the labor movement itself, and to some extent of necessity...

<http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nelson-lichtenstein-labor-moved-left>

Labor and “alt-labor” are complementary in the struggle. Nikki Lewis of Jobs with Justice writes in Medium about the need for stable work schedules to stabilize home and family life:

<https://medium.com/@Nikki.Lewis/this-labor-day-d-c-needs-fair-schedules-96a6ae96abed>

The singular role of criminal justice in the general and campaign debates poses problems for the wider left project if we don’t analytically show how they are linked (that’s what we do, as socialists). Brendan Beck in *New Politics* says “The time has never been better to show that reducing inequality, providing health care, creating affordable housing, and reinvesting in schools are all crime-stopping measures.... If we want an equitable distribution of wealth we no doubt also want an equitable distribution of safety.” <http://newpol.org/content/crime-incarceration-and-left>

The role of housing, often looked at as separate from other sources of inequality, is deeply implicated in the chronically unequal education system and its effect on life-chances. As school

opens, *The Guardian*'s roundup on school segregation, worse than ever, is damning:
http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/sep/07/school-segregation-black-latino-students-race?CMP=ema_565

Another chime-in on reducing mass incarceration, this one from a deeply-supported Urban Institute study released in late August. As you might expect, there is no magic bullet here either... <http://webapp.urban.org/reducing-mass-incarceration/index.html>

The highly visible financial crisis in Greece is one subject in this issue – including the dubious behavior of other governments in the Eurozone, enforcing austerity measures that have hobbled Europe's recovery from the Great Recession. The cultural effect is illuminated by Laurie Penny in this *New Statesman* article (via *Portside*): “The behaviour of the British and wider European elite towards migrants is not simple inhumanity. It is strategic inhumanity. It is weaponised inhumanity designed to convince populations fracturing under hammer-blows of austerity and economic chaos that the enemy is out there, that there is an “us” that must be protected from “them.” <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/08/europe-shouldn-t-worry-about-migrants-it-should-worry-about-creeping-fascism>

What are the effects of gentrification? Local writer Ajan Brown explores this with reporting from the District for *NuTribe*, an online newsmagazine.
<http://www.nutribemagazine.com/2015/07/03/there-goes-the-neighborhood-gentrifications-impact-on-black-communities/>

The goal of DC DSA and many other progressive organizations in the District is to gain statehood for the District to shake off the yoke of Congress. We make all the reasoned arguments, and eyes glaze over. Then John Oliver takes on the issue, and virality ensues...
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcnrz5II9QM>

Larry Hogan's GOP administration in Maryland is walking back numerous environmental regulations set in place in the O'Malley era. Seth Bush, “Beyond Coal” activist at the Maryland Sierra Club, recounts a hearing in which state regulators buffaloed a civilian clean air panel and took the pressure off some of the state's most polluting coal-fired electric power plants. It's from the *Progressive Maryland* blog, cross-posted from the Maryland Sierra site:
http://www.progressivemaryland.org/hogan_administration_backsliding_on_clean_air

Added from *Portside* and *Labor Notes* Sept. 9: A refrain we'd better not forget: “Either you're at the table or you're on the menu.” <http://portside.org/2015-09-08/how-do-we-change-everything-without-pitting-workers-against-planet>

[JACKSONIAN AMERICA- The Racism-Profit Nexus](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By *Bill Mosley*

Review of *Jacksonland: President Andrew Jackson, Cherokee Chief John Ross and a Great American Land Grab* by Steve Inskeep. Penguin Press, New York, 2015.

At a time when race and racism are front and center in the national conversation, a book about the racial politics of nearly two centuries ago and how it helped build the America we know today – for both good and ill – could not be more timely.

And for socialists, the book shows that the quest for profit among white elites, while not the whole story, was certainly a major factor in the rise of racism in America and its persistence today. From slavery to Jim Crow, to Native American removal and extermination, to scapegoating of Latino immigrants – all of these systems flourished in part because there was money to be made in them.

Jacksonland, a lively and well-researched book by National Public Radio reporter Steve Inskeep, shows how the early-19th century drive to remove Native Americans from the eastern United States – focusing on the Cherokees – was animated at least as much as lust for their desirable land holdings as out of pure racial hatred.

For those interested in the story of the Cherokees and their removal from the East, *Jacksonland* fits neatly on the shelf beside Brian Hicks' engaging and well-written *Toward the Setting Sun: John Ross, the Cherokees and the Trail of Tears* from 2011. Both books bring to light the story of Ross, whose life was previously as little-known as it is fascinating. Although mostly of white ancestry (he was only one-eighth Cherokee), Ross came to fully identify with the Cherokee Nation. His education and knowledge of American government led his people to elevate him to chief, where he attempted to use the white legal system against itself to preserve his people and their lands.

While Hicks' book mostly focused on Ross, Inskeep's eye is on Andrew Jackson and his decades-long campaign to drive Natives from the eastern half of the country. (Full disclosure: Inskeep and I are fathers of children who attended the same elementary school). Reading Hicks alone gives one the impression that Jackson's removal efforts were mostly a combination of racism and political ambition. But Inskeep documents another motive: Jackson was poised to make big profits by getting rid of the Cherokees. While serving as an officer in the Army and then in political office, Jackson was involved in removing Natives from their lands – by military force, treaty, coercion or trickery – and then using his connections to procure the land at favorable prices for himself or his friends and allies. Jackson “participated in the biggest real estate bubble in the history of the nation up to that time,” Inskeep writes. “Some of his closest friends and allies would colonize the new country and be installed among its leading citizens. He was nation-building” – by dispossessing the original inhabitants of the land.

The other major player, Chief Ross, despite his mostly white heritage, became the Cherokee's greatest defender. He doggedly insisted on the Cherokees' right to stay put, even as many members of the tribe were bought off and moved west, fearing the cause was lost in the long run – as indeed it was. But Ross operated at a time when Indian removal required at least a fig leaf of legality, and he was successful at gaining political allies and even winning a landmark Supreme Court case featuring an opinion by Chief Justice John Marshall that – if American democracy lived by its own principles – should have ensured that the Cherokees could keep their land into perpetuity. But Jackson responded to Marshall's decision by reputedly sneering "Let him enforce it" – possibly apocryphally, according to Inskip, but the quote did reflect Jackson's thoughts and actions. In the end, the government bribed a band of Cherokees not representing Ross or his government to sign a removal treaty, and at that point the land rush was on and the Trail of Tears was at hand.

Inskip's illumination of how money was at the root of Native American removal and genocide makes it a valuable addition to early American history. It also should fuel sentiment for removing Jackson's portrait from the \$20 bill, which would be a measure of justice – too little, too late, but at least a recognition that Jackson is not the hero that standard histories have made him out to be.

[NOVEMBER DSA CONVENTION: Metro DC DSA Elects Delegates Sept. 13](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By David Duhalde

The biennial Democratic Socialists of America Convention is happening this November 13-15 in Bolivar, Pennsylvania! (Named for famed Latin American liberator Simon Bolivar.)

The gathering couldn't come at a more important time for democratic socialism in America. The Bernie Sanders candidacy presents a democratic socialist candidate to millions of people. This convention will dedicate a good amount of time to how DSA will respond to this opportunity via our independent expenditure, *We Need Bernie*.

This conference also offers DSA members a chance to plan for years after the 2016 elections. Elections come and go, but DSA is here to stay. Convention delegates will finalize the year-long process to craft and update a new strategy for our socialist collective.

To be part of these amazing discussions and decision making processes, you have to be in it, to win it. In other words, you need to be a delegate!

The Metro DC Local of DSA is entitled to ten voting delegates at the convention. We are hosting elections on Sunday, September 13th at 2 PM in the MLK main library branch, 1630 7th St NW, Washington, DC. If you cannot make it, please let us know ahead of time at democraticsocialistsdc@gmail.com. You can run in absentia if you send information and a candidacy statement beforehand.

To be eligible to serve as a delegate, you must be a DSA member in good standing (i.e., paid dues). To join (or rejoin), [click here](#). We will finalize our delegation by September 29th, per national convention rules.

Get updates on this and other Metro DC DSA meetings and events on our [Meetup site](#).

[OBAMA'S CLIMATE PLAN- A Start, But Too Small To Cure the Crisis, Green Lobbyist Tells DSAers](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

The Washington Socialist <> Labor Day 2015

By Woody Woodruff and Andy Feeney

Ben Schreiber, national climate and energy program director for Friends the Earth US (FOE-US), a progressive green lobbying group, spoke to DSA supporters at our local chapter's August general meeting concerning President Obama's national climate action plan. Unfortunately, the tone of his comments – which he delivered as “Ben Schreiber,” individual, and not on behalf of FOE-US — was not only pessimistic, but alarming.

If Schreiber is correct, progressives and green activists face enormous challenges in the years ahead in getting the U.S. to make the energy transitions necessary to head off ever-worsening climate change. What's more, current political and economic realities make it likely that the fossil fuel industry and the American economic elite will find ways to ensure that, if this society ever does anything significant about climate change, the wealthy will force the less well-off to pay for it — just as the U.S. government, at a serious risk to ordinary taxpayers, offered trillions of dollars in loan guarantees to the largest Wall Street banks when it tackled the 2008 financial crisis.

Yet for now, Schreiber indicated, the government's best climate action plan announced to date, even if it can be implemented fully, is inadequate to make the changes in greenhouse gas emissions needed to curb global climate change, no matter who pays the tab. Instead, in Schreiber's estimation, the plan President Obama intends to offer to the upcoming U.N. climate negotiation talks in Paris this December will continue to impose “climate colonialism” on the

poorer and less-industrialized nations of the planet, while failing to limit average global temperatures to a level most climate scientists consider minimally acceptable.

To address the climate change crisis adequately, Schreiber told DSA members and supporters on Aug. 9, would take “a transformation of our entire economy – energy, agriculture, forestry, transportation and other sectors.” It also would entail significant changes in unsustainable, energy-intensive lifestyles now enjoyed by many Americans. But at the government level at this point, Schreiber stated, “No one is talking about radical lifestyle changes; no one is talking about the rapid development of renewable energy that we would need” to make the U.S. economic system environmentally sustainable.

Schreiber spoke to us on Sunday, Aug. 9, less than a week after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the so-called Obama Climate Plan for reducing CO2 emissions by the U.S. electric power industry.

Under a final EPA regulation promulgated on Aug. 3 — which already has been denounced as economically ruinous by Republican presidential candidates, and which is sure to face a flurry of lawsuits by affected industries — the various states would need to develop individual carbon emissions reduction programs that, by the target year 2030, would decrease total power plant carbon emissions in the U.S. by roughly 32 percent compared to 2005 levels. The new regulation would not require the states to begin implementing their new carbon emissions reduction programs until 2020, however, a deadline that the Obama administration and supporters say would give affected power plants and other industries ample time to adjust to the rules.

In announcing the new EPA regulation, White House advisor Brian Deese called the program “the biggest step any single president has made to curb the carbon pollution that is fueling climate change.” The President himself was cited by the BBC as characterizing the new regulation as one cornerstone of an attempt to ensure that the upcoming climate negotiations in Paris in early December will result, for the first time ever, in a global treaty under which all or most nations agree to take action to bring climate change under control.

“This is our moment to get something right ... for our children,” the BBC on Aug. 3 quoted Obama as saying.

Upon its release, the Obama Climate Plan also was praised by Andrew Steer, president of the World Resources Institute, by Sierra Club president Michael Brune, and by Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters, among other talking heads for big American environmental groups. A spokesperson for U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-moon told Reuters that the plan shows the kind of “visionary leadership” needed to make the Paris climate talks successful.

On the other hand, Aljazeera America reporter Ned Resnikoff on Aug. 3 quoted a spokesperson for Greenpeace as calling the plan “an important step forward ... [but] woefully inadequate on its own.” MSNBC, on Aug. 19, [quoted prominent climate scientist James Hansen](#) of NASA as saying that Obama’s actions are “practically worthless” and “do nothing to attack the

fundamental problem.” And *Scientific American* contributor David Biello, on Aug. 6, called the greenhouse gas emission cuts mandated by the plan “significant,” but “also not enough.”

If the Obama Climate Plan survives challenges from Republicans, fossil fuel companies and electric utilities and is fully implemented, Biello wrote, carbon emissions from the U.S. electricity production sector as of the year 2030, when the plan is fully implemented, still will contribute 1.7 billion metric tons of carbon to the atmosphere each year.

That’s “more than the combined emissions of the entire economies of Germany and the U.S. today,” Biello noted. In addition, Biello’s *Scientific American* piece stated, U.S. electric power plants fueled by natural gas-fueled in 2030 will still be emitting around 722 pounds of carbon dioxide for every megawatt of energy generated, which will add further to atmospheric CO₂ burdens that drive destructive levels of climate change.

Biello’s *Scientific American* piece concluded: “This plan is likely the most the US. can do given current political realities and therefore is an important step, but that doesn’t mean it’s sufficient.”

In his remarks to DSA members, Schreiber echoed the tone of Biello’s assessment, but with a little more emphasis on the negative. In particular, he mentioned two aspects of the plan that have been virtually ignored in the media, but that Schreiber believes should be of particular concern to socialists.

The Paris climate negotiation session in December is “already scripted, and is about money,” Schreiber said. The U.S., as the wealthiest capitalist nation on earth, can use its economic power to force smaller and less developed nations to accede to our climate policies. What the U.S. is essentially saying to such countries is “this is not you what you need, but what we’re willing to do, and you’re going to live with it.”

Elizabeth Kolbert in the *New Yorker* described the chief of the UN Framework Commission on Climate Change secretariat, Christiana Figueres of Costa Rica, as having a job with “the very highest ratio of responsibility (preventing global collapse) with authority (practically none).”

Schreiber added that the total reductions in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions that Obama is proposing, which Schreiber says would amount to a 28% reduction over 2005 levels by 2030, would not suffice to limit the rise in global average temperatures to just 2 degrees C over preindustrial levels — the maximum temperature increase that many climate scientists have said can avert serious climate disruptions. By way of contrast with what the climate scientists want, human civilization through its greenhouse gas emissions is currently on schedule to cause a rise in average global temperatures of up to 6 degrees C. However, the U.N. climate negotiations underway, along with the U.S. climate action plan, might limit the temperature rise to around 4 to 6 degrees C.

Unfortunately, Schreiber said, this level of global warming would be disastrous for much of Africa, render much of Australia uninhabitable and cause disaster for low-lying island states already threatened by rising ocean levels.

In promising to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by only 28 percent, Schreiber said, the Obama plan would essentially force smaller and poorer nations in the less-developed world to “become more green than we are.” To help them bear the cost, richer nations are proposing an international climate finance mechanism that would insure a “massive financial transfer to the rest of the world” to allow the U.S. to “continue our slow transition away from a financial fuel economy.”

Whether the financial transfer mechanism will be adequate, though, seems unlikely, and parties to the upcoming talks are arguing over how and when it would come into play. The U.S. wants developing nations to make commitments to CO2 reductions before receiving the money, while representatives of the developing nations want to receive the money before committing to reductions. Friends of the Earth in the United Kingdom has estimated that a “fair share” shift of financial resources to the developing world as part of a climate deal would cost \$632 billion, or roughly \$63.2 billion annually over a decade. Whether this much will be provided is unclear.

On the domestic front, Schreiber warned, there are two contrasting ways in which the U.S. might make its society and economy sustainable in terms of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. The one, politically unlikely path that socialists should support is a “massive democratization of our entire economy,” which among other things would involve massive development of distributed electricity production employing rooftop solar systems, as well as a concerted development of centralized electricity production from renewable energy as well. This path would preclude any rapid phasing out of existing nuclear power plants, to ensure that national greenhouse gas reductions are achieved in time.

The second, more politically likely way for the U.S. economy to become climate-friendly, Schreiber suggested, is through the continuing development of highly centralized energy production controlled by the rich, who could use the transition to more sustainable energy sources to ensure “more capitalism.” Meeting the climate challenge, in short, “could be an opportunity to democratize our society, or it could be another case – like the financial crisis – in which we buy [the wealthy elites] out.”

With this point in mind, Schreiber noted that the Carbon Tracker Initiative has identified some \$3 trillion of wealth, of assets relating to fossil fuels, “that is going to have to disappear if we are to solve climate change.” If all of this \$3 trillion in capital assets needs to be written off, “who will be left holding the bag?”

Schreiber suggested that some of the big fossil fuel companies and their major investors, who in some cases may consist of union pension funds and other seemingly benign institutions, and not merely wealthy individuals, may well be counting on future government bailouts to get them to relinquish “stranded investments” in fossil fuels that need to be written off. He cited as an example Royal Dutch Shell Oil, which recently resigned its membership in the ultra-conservative, climate-denying American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) due to its supposed conversion to the idea that climate change is a pressing problem.

Yet despite its resignation from ALEC, Shell is going ahead with plans to drill for oil in the Chukchi Sea north of Alaska, Schreiber noted. It could be argued that this is an insanely reckless

business decision, if Shell expects serious efforts by the nations of the world to reduce fossil fuel use to head off climate change. But it is possible that Shell and other large fossil fuel companies are anticipating that if they make bad, climate-destructive business investments now, the public will be forced to buy them out in the future, much as the U.S. government during the recent financial crisis bought out the big banks.

In terms of trying to head off the more elitist solution to climate crisis while facilitating a path involving democratization of the economy, Schreiber said, “The best thing we have going for us is rooftop solar,” particularly since private investors have found ways to earn profits from paying for individual homeowners to install such systems on their homes. But the private utility industry, seeing a threat to its own profits in this development, is working through ALEC to block rooftop solar installation by levying a “line charge” on customers with rooftop solar systems to soak up all the economic benefits that can be gained from installing a rooftop solar system. Utility regulators in Arizona have approved such a system of line charges, and Schreiber implied that one major battle facing green energy advocates today lies in preventing other states from following Arizona’s example.

Another big area where a popular fight against the fossil fuel companies is occurring concerns resource extraction activities, as demonstrated by current organizing campaigns against fracking and the Keystone XL pipeline, as well as Shell’s drilling plans for the Arctic. Schreiber said the volume of potential CO2 reductions at stake in battles against resource extraction activities is not necessarily greater than reductions in CO2 emissions that might be gained in some other ways, but popular support for the anti-extraction fight makes it an obvious priority for activism.

What areas of change are best to organize around? Schreiber named the military, the single biggest emission source; consumer behavior; airline emissions; and factory farming. In addition, climate justice campaigns against practices that impact vulnerable communities can gain public sympathy.

The grim reality is that “nobody’s talking about significant lifestyle changes,” Schreiber said, even though there is no question that in the United States, at least, “there’s no question that our entire lifestyle is based on the exploitation of slave labor and the [unsustainable] use of cheap energy.”

In reply to questions, Schreiber identified several progressive and helpful information sources about climate change and climate change activism that DSA members and other progressives might turn to for the latest climate developments. They include FOE-US itself, Greenpeace, the web site of 350.org, the Climate Justice Alliance, and the Labor Network for Sustainability. Schreiber also recommended the UK Guardian’s recent series of articles on energy extraction, *Energy and Environment* (available only by paid subscription), The Smog Blog, and the Huffington Post. Other attendees at the meeting also recommended the online group SumofUs and *Power to the People*.

[ORGANIZING FOR THE FUTURE- Progressive Prince George's Introduces Itself](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

The Washington Socialist <> Labor Day 2015

By Kurt Stand

*I was born by the river in a little tent
Oh and just like the river I've been running ev'r since
It's been a long time, a long time coming
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will*

Sam Cooke's lyrics, beautifully sung by meeting participant Jennifer Lucas, gave voice to the spirit that animated the nearly 100 participants – community and faith-based leaders, social justice and labor activists, and a few elected officials — at the Progressive Prince George's Launch Party and Interest Meeting. Held August 13 at the UFCW Local 400 Building in Landover, the event was sponsored by Progressive Maryland as a step toward building a unifying progressive organization in the county (similar initiatives will take place in Montgomery County and Baltimore). Issues such as the foreclosure crisis – which remains a crisis in the County especially amongst African American homeowners – inadequate public education, a broken criminal justice system and the lack of access to quality jobs are representative of the concerns that brought people to the meeting.

And these were the concerns keynote speaker Pastor Delman Coates (Mt. Ennon Baptist Church) noted that he heard expressed multiple times during his travels through the state while running for Lt. Governor on Heather Mizeur's ticket in last year's gubernatorial race. A leader in the fight for civil rights, he also was a leader in the referendum campaign for marriage equality and in the current struggle for voting rights. In fact, during his speech, he urged all who could to attend his church the following Monday when Rep. John Lewis was to speak about the work done to win the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the work still needed to maintain it today. He concluded with a moving remembrance, from the not so distant days of extreme poverty and segregation in the South, of a woman holding the door open at a bus rest stop so that youth who didn't have a dime could use the facilities. And that was the message: we must do all we can to open and hold open doors that still exclude if we are to have a just society and a true democracy.

Progressive Maryland's interim Executive Director Larry Stafford spoke in a similar vein, pointing out that change comes about when we act, and he spoke of his own experience encountering police violence when still a teenager as pushing him into a life of activism – of speaking up and speaking out so that injustice never goes unchallenged. He talked of the need to change our country's priorities at home and abroad, by working for an alternative where we live. The goal, one activist wrote, was to “fashion a self-managing populist organization concentrating on neighborhood issues and bringing accountability to local government.”

Local activism and organizing was the heart of the meeting. Four Progressive Prince George's community leaders introduced and led breakout sessions on the priority campaigns:

- Better public and official control of police behavior, especially excessive force, uneven treatment of minorities, and resort to gunfire rather than calming situations. Activists involved in the PPG breakout session later testified to a [General Assembly body considering changes](#) to the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBOR), which famously has protected officers accused of unjustified killings in states and cities around the nation. Christian Gant and LaCole Foots led this session.
- Neighborhood control of appropriate development and improving the approval process for projects, which now can shut out affected neighborhoods in the county's relentless search for a commercial tax base. The immediate concern was a Walmart in a residential area along Annapolis Road, which organized neighbors are fighting before the District Council. Jennifer Dwyer led this session.
- A pending Paid Safe and Sick Leave bill that will come before the Prince George's County Council in September. A strong bill was passed in Montgomery County earlier this year with skilled advocacy from the statewide Working Matters Coalition, of which Progressive Maryland is a member. Activists seek an equally strong bill to set the stage in Maryland's two largest counties for advocacy on a statewide bill, the latest version of which will bring sick leave legislation before the General Assembly for the fourth consecutive year. Linda Saffel led this session.

Stafford, in a closing appeal, mentioned many other issues that the organization would tackle, including workers and human rights, income inequality, environmental justice, peace and alternative economics. But the focus, he said, will be developing a grassroots organization that allows Prince Georgians to work collectively on their frontline, local concerns. That organization, he said, needs to develop leaders while also always focused on maximum empowerment of people in their neighborhoods, to be self-motivated rather than top-down. From that, he said, would proceed the kind of popular pressure that could require accountability from public officials in the county and at the state level as well.

Much work remains to win those battles and to root the organization more solidly in the county. A hopeful sign of the potential to do just that was the presentation of two high school students at the meeting's end, with one – Juwan Blocker – declaiming a performance piece that spoke in equal parts of anger and hope. A poem expressing sentiments in parallel with the final verse of Sam Cooke's song written more than four decades ago:

*There have been times that I thought I couldn't last for long
But now I think I'm able to carry on
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will*

Woody Woodruff contributed to this article

[PERILOUS INSIGHTS- Violence and the Work of Women Journalists](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Carolyn M. Byerly

The annual ritual of honoring our labor also challenges us to consider the risks that those in the workforce face in their jobs. The women who labor in the news industry are among those who face some of the greatest emotional and physical risks on a daily basis.

A 2014 study by International Women's Media Foundation and the International News Safety Institute ([IWMF, 2015](#)) found that two-thirds of the 977 women reporters they surveyed across the world had experienced violence on their jobs – intimidation, threats of abuse, actual abuse, and abuse of power or authority. Of those, the greatest number said these acts were perpetrated by their own supervisors or co-workers.

This shocking finding reveals the reality of women in journalism today – they have made their way into the male bastion of newsrooms, but they still are not welcome. Women's liberation has opened doors, but it has not yet eradicated deeply institutionalized sexism.

Respondents to the IWMF study also said they encounter abuse from police and other officials they interact with in the course of reporting. More than a fifth said they had experienced physical violence in retaliation for what they had reported.

The stark episode of CBS reporter [Lara Logan's](#) on-camera sexual assault by a crowd of men as she covered protests in Tahrir Square in Cairo in 2011 makes these numbers real, as does a similar brutal attack against British journalist Natasha Smith soon after. Both women detailed their accounts later in news interviews, and Smith wrote about hers in her blog.

Some women journalists reported being assaulted in one-on-one attacks on streets or other public places. About half said they had been sexually harassed in their workplaces by male bosses and co-workers. Few of any of these incidents had been reported – and small wonder because most news organizations around the world still do not have policies against sexual harassment. Neither do companies provide support after their journalists are harassed or attacked.

The women journalists behind these statistics are the ones who endured to work on. Not all were so lucky.

[Mindy Ran](#), a freelance feminist journalist and co-chair of the Gender Council, International Federation of Journalists, recounts a long list of women who were brutally slain in the line of reporting. Among them were several who reported on Chechnya, including Elina Ersenoeva, and a few months later, Russian investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya, both in 2006. Somali writer Horriyo Abdulkadir was shot point-blank by gunman in 2011 who left a note saying “she talked too much.”

Mexico is the most dangerous country in the world to be a journalist today, particularly for women. In 2011, Marcela Yarce Viveros and Rocío González were found naked, bound and gagged and dead after reporting on official corruption. That same year, Mexican newspaper editor Elizabeth Macías Castro was found decapitated by police with a note left by her killers saying she died for writing about criminal activities on social media websites.

The Communication and Information on Women ([CIMAC](#)), a Mexican feminist news agency founded in 1989 to provide a gender perspective in journalism, has expanded its activities into advocacy after many of its writers were assaulted or threatened. In 2010, CIMAC increased its investigation and reporting on the murder of hundreds of young women in the north of Mexico since the 1990s, as well as drug trafficking and official corruption.

Retaliatory attacks against female reporters escalated followed, and in 2015, CIMAC undertook [a study](#) to track violence against both male and female reporters in Mexico. The study documented 13 cases of violence against female reporters in 2010, 39 cases in 2011 and 47 in 2013. While assaults against Mexican male reporters increased 276% in the five years examined, assaults against women increased 2,200%, the report said. Mexican police have repeatedly refused to either investigate or make arrests in these cases, or to protect journalists in their work.

Organizations are also under threat. CIMAC’s headquarters were vandalized in 2008, with most of its computers and archives stolen, after the agency posted stories about the rape of young girls by police and military soldiers. The agency’s journalists – like women journalists around the world – are also stalked and threatened online, and harassed in their reporting.

Only in recent years have any of the journalism watch groups separated data by gender in their monitoring of reporters’ safety, and incidents are believed to be greatly underreported. Reporters without Borders, which presently counts women as only 7% of all journalists murdered in the line of work, believes the actual number to be closer to 13%.

Mindy Ran and other feminist journalists led the campaign in pressuring the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and International Labor Organization (ILO) to advocate for passage of [Resolution 2222](#) by the UN Security Council in May 2015. That measure condemned attacks against journalists and called on world governments “to create a safe environment in law and practice for media professionals to do their work”. In addition, these same activist organizations have initiated a movement that resulted in the earlier UN General Assembly’s adoption of the an International [Day to End Impunity](#) Against Journalists in 2013. That resolution pressures authorities to investigate journalists’ murders and bring killers to

justice. While not specific to women, these measures will clearly benefit women journalists, alive and deceased.

Groups like Reporters without Borders, Committee to Protect Journalists, and Article 19 have also been more pro-active in addressing the victimization of women reporters. On International Women's Day this year, IFJ called for an end to violence against women journalists.

The most dangerous work for women journalists is and will undoubtedly remain reporting on men's violence, whether that violence is interpersonal assaults like rape or battering, structural violence like official corruption, or societal violence like war.

Notes:

Carolyn M. Byerly is a member of DC Metro DSA. She is on the faculty of the School of Communications, Howard University, Washington, DC.

A version of this article titled "Violence and the Women Who Cover It" appeared in [Media Report to Women](#), Summer 2015 (Vol. 43, No. 3).

[REBRAND WASHINGTON FOOTBALL- Grassroots Organization Demands A Name Change](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Bill Mosley

As the new football season gets underway, a grassroots advocacy group is kicking into high gear its campaign to change the name of Washington's National Football League team.

While there has been considerable media coverage of allegations that the name "Redskins" is a racial slur, and a number of Native American nations have campaigned for the name change, the new organization – calling itself Rebrand Washington Football (RWF) – is the first grassroots, non-Native group to take up the cause of changing the name. Started by long-time fans Ian Washburn and Josh Silver, RWF thought it was important to stand in solidarity with Native Americans.

"The name is a dictionary-defined slur. [Team owner Daniel Snyder] says he means no harm using the name," Silver says. "However, throughout history, minorities have been called slurs and insults in order to justify inferior treatment of them. The team names perpetuates unhealthy stereotypes. The right thing to do is for Mr. Snyder to change the name immediately."

RWF's principal activity has been a campaign, begun early this year, to collect petition signatures that will be delivered to team owner Snyder, showing him that there is substantial popular demand among local football fans and the general public for changing the name. Petitions have been circulated outside Metrorail stations, at street fairs and community meetings. The signature total is nearing 1,000 and the group expects to collect many more.

RWF anticipates delivering the first batch of petitions to Mr. Snyder and the team in early December as the season is winding down. RWF will keep collecting signatures and engage in other activities until Snyder does the right thing, Silver says. In response to previous RWF activism, the Arlington County Council passed a resolution asking Snyder to change the name, and Montgomery County will not use the name in official county communication.

RWF is seeking people interested in circulating petitions in their communities or workplaces, at transit hubs or any other place people gather. Please e-mail billmosley@comcast.net if you'd like to become involved. You can also email RWF at rebrandwf@gmail.com and you can also visit the website at <http://www.rebrandwf.org>.

[ROOTS OF OUR INEQUALITY: Steve Fraser's Age of Acquiescence and the search for solutions](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> September 2015**

By Lynn Williamson

Note: This bare-bones summary of the wealth of historical data and social, political and psychological analysis in *The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Organized Wealth and Power* by Steve Fraser [most recent reading by the Metro DC DSA Book Group – ed.] is meant to give a prospective reader a brief, inviting taste of the highly readable, but weighty (literally and metaphorically) valuable work that lacks only the presentation of a viable path to get out of our current ever-widening gulf between the rich and the poor in America.

The book is structurally organized into two merging, mixing but ultimately diverging eras, both times of rampant inequality between the rich and the poor: the Gilded Age of the 'long 19th century' with its "great noise" of protest, and the current Gilded Age of "great silence." Fraser leads us through the glorification of technical Progress in the first Gilded Age where industrial capitalism, producing the miracles of lightbulbs, sewing machines, telephones, emerged via "...the systematic cannibalizing of various forms of precapitalist economies and the societies they supported." Fraser calls this process "primitive accumulation," and the wealth of former enterprises like subsistence farmers, homesteaders, peddlers, craftsmen, small-town shopkeepers

fed into the maw of the factories, machines, railroads, banks, of industrial capitalism. Primitive accumulation produced farmers perpetually in debt or losing their farms; rampant use of leased convict labor under a southern judicial conspiracy, and what was emerging as “wage slavery” capital accumulation by exploiting wage labor in cities. As Fraser states, “Combined and happening at the same time, the imminent extinction of the family farm and the descent into the dependency of wage slavery in the cities provided the critical mass for the unparalleled explosion of anticapitalist resistance that distinguished the long nineteenth century.”

Fraser points out that people steeped in precapitalist ways of life conflated plutocratic capitalists with the old-world aristocrats, and that the prevailing resistance language of violence came from a fear of slavery: “...a society that feels it may be living on the precipice of slavery is a society living on the precipice, on the edge of some final confrontation.” The rebellions that began to erupt, for example the 1877 national railroad workers strike, were treated by officialdom as a crime wave perpetrated by brigades of lawless “tramps.” Racial phobias were used to denigrate strikers as “savages” and “squaws,” while the whole power of the legal system backed by government militias to quell the labor uprisings was commanded by industrial capitalists. Meanwhile, the labor movement itself became fragmented by racial and ethnic hatred and distrust. As Fraser says, “Even while the strikers were displaying extraordinary courage in facing off against United States Steel and the vast infrastructure of power it [the corporation] could bring to its defense, the strike became a theater of primordial tribalism, proving how impossible it was to separate the labor question from the race question.”

Fraser explains that at the end of the long 19th century the reforms of the New Deal brought a “civilized capitalism.” This tamed version of capitalism, in conjunction with the rising American standard of living based on the “progress” of economic growth, “...became the solvent in which all those immemorial hard-edged social antagonisms of the long nineteenth century would dissolve.” At the same time certain anti-capitalist words, the language of resistance like “class,” “exploitation,” “public ownership, or “socialism,” were essentially purged from the American vocabulary as dangerous in a process of “linguistic cleaning.” Americans lost the very words for resisting.

The rise of financial capitalism and the proliferation and glorification of mass consumerism heralded the second Gilded Age. This “flexible capitalism” began to cannibalize the structures of industrial capitalism throughout America in a process of deindustrialization to provide liquid funds for the magical “financial engineers” who could turn money into more money by trading paper assets “...while passing the intermediary messiness of producing anything.” But as Fraser points out, “deindustrialization is antiseptic terminology for social devastation” as whole towns and associated jobs, social supports and traditions “*went down with the smokestacks.*” What Fraser calls “flexible labor,” a euphemism for “disposable workers,” became a hallmark of the finance-driven economy, as did the rise of poverty associated with low-wage labor in food-service and retail jobs. Convict labor made a comeback in support of private enterprise.

During our second Gilded Age, the “...fable of the financier especially (as well as the techno-entrepreneur) as freedom fighter has made its unique contribution to that mood of acquiescence..” as has the fable of the Wall Streeter as “heroic revolutionary.” Moneymaking was transformed into “a fearless quest for self-discovery.” Fraser calls this transformation, the

“mythos of the plutocrat as rebel.” And these American rebel plutocrats perfected a populist morph into the faux-Bubba, appealing to Americans as “a simple country billionaire.” Americans could participate in the quest for individuality at the mall by consuming gear and products “...to create a magical realm in which all is harmony, happiness and contentment...” And if you couldn’t afford this quest for individual expression via consumables, then borrowing, assuming debt was the answer. Then, weighted down by debt, addicted to debt, consumer culture undergirds a state of permanent wage labor.

Meanwhile, flexible capitalism has less need for permanent workers, so a new labor category emerged: emancipated labor or the free agent, liberated to “do his own thing.” Be your own boss; work at home, leading to longer hours via self-exploitation. Voluntary servitude was replacing wage slavery. As Fraser explains, “...the outlook of neoliberal flexible capitalism sees the self as the ultimate resource, self-exploitation another name for self-expression, and the more pliable and more malleable, the freer.” This free agency, “the individual public offering,” of talents and capabilities, however, meant the loss of economic security, and health and retirement benefits. Fear and desperation led to anxiety, dread and docility. Outside contractors performed the work previously done inside the company, leading to the lessening of social ties that benefitted unions. Those at the poverty level in this system of economic capitalism put the blame on themselves as free agents who “made bad choices.” In a telling linguistic turnaround, the term “parasite” in our current Gilded Age is directed at the lowly poor, not the bloated, financial capitalist, supported and bailed out by government welfare.

Finally, as a frightening coda, Fraser sees a pervasive inability for Americans to even imagine a system outside of capitalism. He says, “...the capacity to envision something generically new...has always supplied the intellectual emotional and political energy that made an advance in civilized life, no matter how truncated, possible.” And, horrifically, “To be grown up in the Age of Acquiescence may be a sign of early-onset senescence.” How do we get out of this mess? Maybe Fraser’s next book will help.

*<>Editor’s Note: The Metro DC DSA Book Group meets more or less monthly. Fraser’s *The Age of Acquiescence* was the topic at the most recent meeting, and participants agreed it was so substantive it deserved some further discussion at the next get-together. That’s Sunday, Oct. 4 at 3 p.m. at the Kogod Courtyard, National Portrait Gallery, where the time will be split between a further consideration of Fraser’s book and a read of Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*. More information and updates are at the Metro DC DSA [Meetup site](#).*

[TRANS PACIFIC TRADEOFF-TPP Vote Now Unlikely Before December, Opponents Say](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> Labor Day 2015**

By Andy Feeney

A congressional vote on the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), which opponents in a variety of progressive movements have denounced as a blatant power grab by multinational corporations, is now unlikely before December of this year. Due to continuing disagreements over certain trade and intellectual property provisions among the different Pacific Rim nations still negotiating the detailed provisions of the pact, final language for the TPP won't be available for President Obama's signature until this September at the earliest. Under the provisions of a "fast track" bill that Obama and congressional Republicans narrowly managed to pass last summer, Obama's signature on a proposed TPP will begin a 30-day period in which members of Congress can view the document, but not members of the American public. Then another 60 days must pass in which the proposed TPP is available for inspection by all before Congress can vote on the proposed TPP and Obama can sign it into law.

If the different nations hoping to form the TPP can iron out their disagreements by this month, then, activists within the labor, environmental, consumer rights, health care advocacy and other movements hoping to stop the TPP will need to scramble to mobilize enough popular opposition to it that Congress will vote it down in December. But some anti-TPP activists hope that if the TPP negotiators cannot reach an agreement on the pact's provisions in time, congressional action on the TPP will be put off until next year. Because new "free trade" treaties have been highly controversial in the US since the 1993 approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA, it's likely that the supporters of TPP will then seek to avoid making it a potential issue in 2016 election campaigns, which probably would mean that supporters would wait until the lame duck session of Congress in December 2016 to bring it to a vote.

This at least has been the thinking in two recent anti-TPP conference calls organized by Andrea Miller of People Demanding Action (PDA-Action) with support from MoveOn.org organizers around the country, labor and environmental activists, and the Global Trade Watch program of Public Citizen.

In an anti-TPP conference call in late August, however, organizers against the TPP said the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, frustrated by the continuing inability of Congress and the White House to push the measure through, may now be pressuring Congress to hold a vote on the TPP by as early as next March. It's likely that this idea will prove unpopular with the pact's supporters in both parties who would rather avoid discussing the pact during an election year, but some TPP opponents do think that an early 2016 vote on the pact is a possibility.

What is urgently important for TPP foes to do now, activists on the conference call stated, is to keep up the pressure on Congress and – as Miller said on the call – to “educate, educate, educate” voters about the many ways in which the TPP would be detrimental to the public at large, both in the U.S. and in other would-be signatory countries, such as New Zealand, Australia, Japan and Malaysia.

Palpable perils to organized labor, consumers, the natural environment and representative democracy in the signatory nations could flow from the TPP and from a second pro-corporate trade pact that the Obama administration is promoting, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP. Readers who want more information about TPP and TTIP and the coalition of activist groups that is contesting them should visit the Global Trade Watch web site at <http://www.citizen.org/Page.aspx?pid=1328> and to the PDA-Action web page on trade, at <http://www.peopledemandingaction.org/campaigns/stop-tpp-fast-track>

[UNPLEASANT FOREGROUND, EVEN WORSE BACKSTAGE- Greece's mugging by Europe](#)

Monday, September 7th, 2015

The Washington Socialist – September 2015

By Woody Woodruff

The fast-moving political scenario in Greece, as well as in the Eurozone that is jam-packed with Greece's implacable creditors, is taking place against a backdrop in which reckless lenders of cheap money since the beginning of the Great Recession have established global hegemony over sovereign aspirations and continue to reduce their own risk by loading the responsibility on governments.

As Europe, in particular, struggles with the downside of a single currency, a North-South Eurodivide has emerged as stark as [the one Willy Brandt identified](#) for the whole global system of national inequality many decades ago.

Greece's fate is still uncertain, though the scenario that developed by the end of August was less volatile. The left-wing Syriza party, elected to govern in early spring, was split severely by the leadership's acceptance of an onerous and humiliating bailout deal with the "troika" representing Greece's creditors – the European Central Bank, IMF and European Union. The deal, which had more or less been rejected soundly by Greek voters in a hastily-called referendum, included the privatization of public enterprises, even more grinding austerity for workers and pensioners, tax increases and the insertion of European Union monitors in Greece's national government. It was, Ian Parker said in a *New Yorker* profile of flamboyant Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, "even more severe and humiliating" than the one turned down by the electorate.

The reluctant acceptance of what Syriza's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras privately called the "blackmailing ultimatum" split Syriza. Tsipras got the package, with Greek concessions, through the Greek Parliament with the help of centrist and right-wing parties but lost a big chunk of his own, which reconstituted itself as an opposition party. Having lost his working majority, Tsipras strategically resigned, bringing in a caretaker government and an election, now set for Sept. 20, that would be the test of whether he could cobble together a majority coalition after having accepted a kind of deal he was elected to contest.

Behind that public, political show was the international financial equivalent of a back-alley beating by bullies. North European members of the Eurozone, led by Germany, were intent on bringing to heel not only debt-burdened southern nations in the Eurozone but any left-wing parties in the common-currency zone that showed fight against the prevailing winds of austerity-as-debt-relief.

James Galbraith, an economics professor at the University of Texas (Austin) and frequent critic of austerity in the US and elsewhere, knew Varoufakis well as a colleague in the UT economics department. When Varoufakis returned to Greece to join Syriza's move into government, Galbraith was close to the action, going to Greece several times this year as a volunteer consultant. He shows up in Parker's somewhat star-struck *New Yorker* portrait of Varoufakis and collaborated on refined versions of a "Modest Proposal" so-called, a counter-austerity plan for a Europe-wide Keynesian redistribution of resources to lift working classes throughout the Eurozone. Not incidentally, this sort of rump version of the Marshall Plan would aid the sovereign finances and lives of people in e.g. Italy, Greece and Spain. The "troika" members, unimpressed, were clearly uninterested in any moves that would bolster the fortunes of left-wing parties and movements in Europe. Any success of a left-wing party pushing back against austerity would be a precedent that the North, Germany above all, would not permit.

This scenario and the politics of the Eurozone were the topic of Galbraith's July 28 talk at the Economic Policy Institute in DC. At that point it was still uncertain whether Greece would defiantly default and be forced to exit the Euro, or be forced to accept the worst that the creditors could offer. Galbraith suggested it was a slow-rolling tragedy that would result in Greece's acceptance of the terms, since most Greeks did not want to exit the Euro.

The roots of the Greek financial crisis, Galbraith acknowledged, were decades during which Greece was "misgoverned" in advance of the first real confrontation with creditors in 2010. The state had "borrowed recklessly from reckless banks," the *New Yorker's* Parker summarized. To get even difficult terms, the country was forced to promise lower pensions and more neoliberal labor conditions, trying to boost what Galbraith said had been declining productivity coupled with rising wages and bloated public payrolls. The North Eurozone, often scornful of the work ethic of the Mediterranean Eurozone members, were "using a small country as the arena for radical deregulation of the labor market."

Three governments in succession failed to deliver and fell, and each time terms became more onerous. Syriza, which Galbraith described as "an unusual coalition of left forces of all classes," was elected in early 2015 to fight back.

Meanwhile the public officials in the "troika" worked after 2010 to shift the debt of Greece and other debtor countries from the reckless banks who had made the loans to the public's pocketbook. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, in 2010 head of the IMF and preparing (pre-scandal) to run for the presidency of France, overrode his staff and bailed out several French banks that were seriously overleveraged in the Greek debt. "The French behaved deplorably," Galbraith declared. Altogether the bailout of Europe's overextended banks amounted to "the most lending in history." Once the "troika" officials took over from the banks, they could apply the squeeze directly. "They only wanted to talk about tightening," Galbraith said, instead of being willing to

discuss debt relief – actually writing down principal. This despite the fact that IMF staffers stated baldly that under the terms applied, Greece’s debt was [unsustainable and simply could not be paid off](#).

As the crisis intensified in June and July, Varoufakis told Parker, Greece was offered terms that were so unpleasant that it was “the kind of offer you make when you don’t want an agreement.” In his conversations with the *New Yorker* writer he suggested that the Euro group applied humiliating terms, stalled and starved the Greek economy in order to hurt Syriza’s credibility with the Greek people. He [told](#) Slavoj Žižek “the Troika is cleverly forcing upon the government legislation that spreads and entrenches further its own fiefdoms within the state.” Syriza, he said, to the Euro group is “a government we don’t want” and their offers were designed to upend the country’s politics – again. Varoufakis said to the Euro group negotiators, “Don’t crash us. If you crash us, we’ll end up with some very nasty people taking over” – still a possibility if Tsipras can’t gain a coalition opportunity out of the Sept. 20 election.

Certainly the alternative offered in the “Modest Proposal” runs counter to austerity and the rescue of banks. The plan, which Galbraith characterized as “pro-European progressivism,” pushes the currency union gently toward political union with Europe-wide redistributive actions. Parker paraphrased Varoufakis’s opposition to the 2001 adoption of the Euro by Greece: “If there was going to be a currency union, then it should not be half-baked, and should function more like the one that joins California and Alabama.”

The [Modest Proposal](#) stated:

“We propose that four areas of economic activity be europeanised: banks in need of ESM [European Stability Mechanism] capital injections, sovereign debt management, the recycling of European and global savings into socially productive investment and prompt financing of a basic social emergency programme. . . . While broad in scope, the Modest Proposal suggests no new institutions and does not aim at redesigning the Eurozone. It needs no new rules, fiscal compacts, or troikas. It requires no prior agreement to **move in a federal direction** [emphasis added] while allowing for consent through enhanced cooperation rather than imposition of austerity.”

Galbraith suggested that the somewhat divided Euro group was following the lead of Germany, portrayed in Greece as the villain of the story. Having been instrumental in the shifting of the Greek debt risk from the banks to the public, Galbraith said, the German officials were just as stuck as their colleagues with the consequences of the austerity program and the unsustainability of the Greek debt. German officials, he said, had to be thinking “Can you really say to the German taxpayer that we have made loans that can never be repaid? [If you do] wait until after my career” is finished.

Varoufakis, a Marxist since his school days in England, told Parker that these events were evidence of structural flaws in capitalism. “Most of my colleagues in economics think of crises as preventable accidents – a mistake of some policy – whereas, if you look at the world from my perspective, capitalism generates them.”

[WE NEED BERNIE: DSAers work the crowds for socialist values](#)

Tuesday, September 8th, 2015



DSA members canvassed with fliers for the Bernie Sanders campaign at the Takoma Park Farmers Market in August, top. Front, left to right are Bill Mosley and Andy Feeney; second row Ingrid Goldstrom, Kamron Burt, Carlos McKnight, Woody Woodruff and Merrill Miller.

At bottom, tabling at the Greenbelt Labor Day Festival for DSA and Bernie: from left, Woody Woodruff, Lisa Foley Stand, Kurt Stand and Lucy Duff.