

the Socialist

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Editorial

Organizing for the Long Term

September 17, 2011 marked the beginning of the Occupy movement. As a result, protest is back in circulation as a topic of discussion in households, schools and workplaces across the US. It's mass marches, targeted acts of non-violent civil disobedience and numerous arrests has made Occupy difficult to ignore. And, since the beginning, Socialists have not only been involved in the action that makes it into newspapers, we have also been involved in the day to day work, planning, organizing, doing outreach that keeps the movement running. Occupy has certainly become a major focus of not only the SPUSA, but of the entire socialist left. As we become more and more embedded into this exciting movement, it is important to keep in mind the benefits of belonging to an established Socialist organization - we have a history to draw from, a future to look forward to, and we create community in the present.

When you make the decision to join the SPUSA you are entering an organization with over one hundred years of history. Our organization has been active in organizing against war since World War I. We were there during the height of the labor movement and we organized for civil rights in the 1950's and 60's. We saw Palmer Raids and HUAC trials. We've marched, sat-in, spoken-out and gone on strike. Having this kind of long and storied past allows new and younger members to become a part of a new generation of organizers. In some cases, this past is literally alive in the stories and lessons of our older members. Having a history is important because it allows us to draw inspiration and to learn from those who came before us.

There is a sense of historical continuity and perpetuity that allows us the perspective and experience to recognize that there is a rhythm to making change. That organizing is not always fast paced and exciting, that in between the monumental movements, there is still a lot of work to do, and the work that we do during the down times, when we continue to speak out against injustice, educate the people in our workplaces and communities, and prepare for what is to come. It is during these times that having a history helps us to maintain focus and to see the importance of our work even when we are not working in a major movement that is making the nightly news. It is our history that allows us to stay present and to work to create the networks in the present that prepare us for the organizing to come.

In the present, being part of the SPUSA allows us to create networks of people who we know well and who we trust. This has functioned well in our work in the Occupy movement. When the

movement began, we were not starting from scratch. Instead, we were able to draw from a large pool of people with whom we had worked with in the past. This allowed us to take part in this new and exciting movement in a meaningful way. We have been able to offer resources to the movement through our experience and knowledge. We have been able to work with other organizations and individuals with whom we cultivated relationships over time and we were able to support each other when we took part in civil disobedience and were arrested.

The relationships that we develop through being a part of an organization allow us to give the maximum as individuals to whatever social movement we find ourselves involved in. Our relationships also serve to give a sense of community to our work. Internally, when we eat meals together, attend birthday parties or other social events together, we strengthen the our organization. Being a member of the SPUSA gives you an opportunity to get to know people who otherwise you might not have had the opportunity to meet, to develop relationships that have positive effects on both our ability to organize and to grow as individuals.

By taking a historical perspective and developing strong networks both in our locals and nationally, we are able to take a long term view of our work. We recognize, the belonging to an organization means that we are in the struggle for the long term. While Occupy is exciting and offers a lot of hope for the future, we know that we will still be here, organizing, no matter what happens in the movement. We know that there is a long road ahead of us and that our organization has a role to play on it. As we draw on the lessons we are learning through the occupy movement, and as we incorporate them into our organization, we see ourselves as one part of this great experiment in creating a more democratic and participatory society. We know that as the struggle continues, we will have many more battles to fight and that the world that we are fighting for may be a long way off.

Despite this, we can draw from the long term vision of a Democratic Socialist future and know that our work in the present will have serious consequences on the future. Whether we are in a moment like now where big things are happening, or in a moment when sometimes we feel like the lone voice, we know that what we are working towards is worth it. We draw from our past, build our networks in the present, and look forward to a day when our project is complete and society runs on the values of solidarity, compassion and justice. Being a member of the SPUSA allows us to keep this vision in our sight and to continue to fight.

Statement of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY strives to establish a radical democracy that places people's lives under their own control - a non-racist, classless, feminist socialist society... where working people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. We believe socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future - to a real radical democracy from below. The Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support militant working class struggles and electoral action, independent of the capitalist controlled two-party system, to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic revolutions - radical and fundamental changes in the structure and quality of economic, political, and personal relations - to abolish the power now exercised by the few who control great wealth and the government. The Socialist Party is a democratic, multi-tendency organization, with structure and practices visible and accessible to all members.

Lessons I Learned When I was Young

by David McReynolds

Some things about organizing are common sense. If radical politics are entirely about reading political books and discussing “correct positions,” only the loneliest people will stick around. The New York Local is a good example of doing some of the things that give life to socialist politics—the monthly pot luck dinners, going out for beer after the monthly membership meeting.

When I was young, I learned some lessons about organizing. In 1948, when I was still young and neither cell phones nor color TV existed, I was just getting involved with the pacifist movement. Although technology has changed how we organize today, it is worth remembering how the Los Angeles Youth Fellowship of Reconciliation, a group of religious pacifists, got started.

The Field Secretary of the FOR persuaded a group of liberal young Christians to take part in a several-day march, from the outskirts of Los Angeles into the city against a proposal for compulsory military training for all youth. What happened was that because this group of young people was together for more than a few hours (they were together for a week), they formed a special bond. In the years that followed, most of the kids who were on that walk eventually got married to each other. When I got involved in this group a year or two later, I made sure that in addition to meetings and discussions, we would demonstrate against things such as the Armed Forces Day Parade, which came once a year. Those were the years of a very conformist society with none of the turbulence we see today with Occupy.

The birth of the Civil Rights movement was still a few years in the future. At the time, a demonstration of a dozen people was still a big deal. I knew that if I wanted to move the students in our group toward a more radical sense of politics, I needed to get them to express their beliefs in such a way they could realize that they had crossed a line from being respectable to being outside the accepted politics of the time. The students were suspicious of me, since they knew I was a Socialist as well as a pacifist. But I remember the demonstration in Los Angeles at a time when the United States was talking about building a hydrogen bomb (this is now the standard nuclear bomb, much more powerful than the ones used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki). When our little group of pacifists walked by the offices of the city government, where the employees were all “suit and tie” conformists, they called us “Reds” and “Comms.” But when our little line went by the one very large public market in downtown L.A., a place where the poor shopped, it was important for my “socially conservative” friends to see the difference. People took our



leaflets, one man rushed up, seeing the signs, and asked, “Is the store on strike? Should I take my groceries back?” To him the posters meant strikes and labor struggles. It was a fascinating difference to see the reactions of the middle class and the working people.

Later, when I had moved to New York City, there had been small yearly arrests in City Hall Park, when there was an annual Civil Defense Drill, when everyone had to rush to shelter once the sirens went off. Dorothy Day, of the Catholic Worker, and some of the staff and members of the War Resisters League, were arrested in 1955. Each year Day got arrested and we would picket the Women’s House of Detention (then located in the center of Greenwich Village, at Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue).

In 1960, Bayard Rustin and I worked out a plan to “expand” the handful of people who were getting arrested. We wrote a leaflet saying:

“If you oppose the nuclear arms race, and know there is no defense against

Continued on p14

Contents

- 2 Editorial**
- 3 Lessons I Learned**
David McReynolds
- 4 Interpretation of Occupy**
Keon Skelton
- 5 Organizing the Left**
Stephon Boatwright
- 6 Occupy Work**
Dan LaBotz
- 7 Remembering Quinn Brisbane**
David McReynolds
- 8 Revitalizing the LA Local**
Lynn Lomibao and Mimi Soltisyk
- 10 IWD in Mongolia**
Michelle Borok
- 11 Organizing May Day**
Jim Marra
- 12 May Day Statement**
National Action Committee
- 13 Drive for Five**

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Kristin Schall

Copy Editing

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Contact the Editor

Kristin Schall, Editor, SP-USA

339 Lafayette St. #303

NYC 10012 socialistzine@gmail.com

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One Interpretation of the Occupy Movement

by Keon Skelton

It is rare to witness what appears to be the beginning of a mass social movement. Most of us have, myself included, only read about social movements in textbooks, looked at pictures of mass demonstrations from the civil rights era in the United States, and of movements in Latin America. But all we know of them is their end result. Consequently, we see movements as objects, things that happened in some distant historical moment. Such an understanding of social action and history is not coincidental. So long as people see movements as things within a specific historical moment, so long as movements are understood as “happenings,” the desire for social transformation is stymied.

What many of us are witnessing and participating in today is the beginning of a mass movement for democracy and the ever-allusive ideal of freedom and justice for all people. Indeed social movements are not mere things, and they are not just individuals assembling to chant and march. A movement like Occupy Wall Street (OWS) is one of the most critical forms of education: individuals coming together out of some deep and urgent concern to create a space for dialogue with others suffering oppression and marginalization. In this way, they are creating a new vision of society, and are developing the necessary powers to transform it accordingly. When we speak of social movements, we are also talking about agitation centered on a certain theme. In OWS’s case the agitation, resistance, and organizing is linked to the adverse impact of capitalism. The great contribution of OWS has been to open up a dialogue over capitalism, specifically capitalism’s continuous infringement on people’s human rights, general welfare, and personal dignity.

Some if not all within OWS want to end exploitation of the public by the big banks. Yet, OWS is diverse and there are differing standpoints on what must be done. Some in OWS believe

capitalism is not inherently bad. Others believe that capitalism is inherently exploitative and incompatible with human freedom, human creativity, and a democratic society. The simple fact is that corporations have overrun the system. So we need to push back. We need to push back against specific things, like Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission, and get the corporate greed out of politics. All participants in this movement agree that the expansion of the capitalist market logic into the sphere of public rights is unacceptable. All OWS participants believe protecting rights and addressing the needs of people must be the measure of any good society.

Societies that are at their foundation based on inequality and oppression are filled with deep contradictions. These contradictions are often obscured by abstract notions. We have been told that governments do not grant rights and freedoms, that these freedoms come from within, that freedom and rights are an inherent part of our existence as human beings, and so on. Yet, the so-called “free market” economy robs people of dignity, respect, and the basic foundations of life.

Despite what would seem to be a glaring contradiction, many continue to hold fast to these ideas. Why? The idea of a free market for a free people appeals to people. It occupies the space of the human imagination, thereby absorbing new ideas and marginalizing others that threaten the current power structure of the country. The Occupy movement has pierced this veil. It has allowed for a brief peak at one of the potential outcomes of a successful movement for democratic society: to be free and live without the shackles of debt, without chains of fear of economic failure. If one is truly free, then they must be guaranteed the tools and capacity to govern their society with the other members of that society. These ideas are called “radical” or “impractical.” Yet, what OWS really represents is the bursting forth of a long suffering democratic imagination.

As I was told by other long-time activists, Occupy is a movement that prefigures the type of society that should exist in the future. In other words, its philosophy moves from idea to practice, seeks to subordinate the economy to the needs of all people, and opposes the current practice of subordinating people to the needs of an all-powerful thing called “the economy.” More importantly, the people who have stepped onto this historical stage have revealed that the nature of this economy is not a mysterious thing: It is simply the exploitation of people by corporations.

Taking up space

One of the most spectacular aspects of the Occupy movement has been the physical appropriation of space. What first comes to mind are the encampments. As small manifestations of the radical imagination, they transformed anonymous places largely used to get to one place or the other into vibrant, dynamic, and festive public spaces. These newly transformed spaces served as a small utopias, where people committed themselves to educating each other, dialoguing, and eating and governing with each other. These public spaces were rough examples of a radical democratic project, a sneak peak at what

Continued on p14



Organizing the Left

by Stephon Boatwright

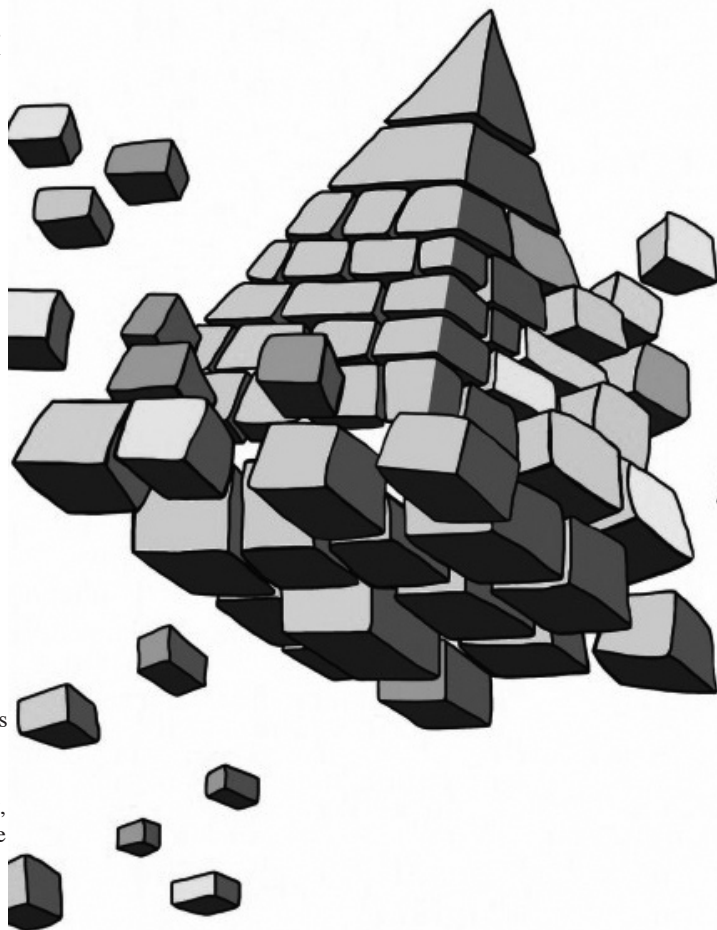
Organizing is just one of those words that activists use so much that it has become difficult to pinpoint what exactly one means when they say “We have to organize!” It is not so much the what, it’s the objective, which is to bring people together for a mutually recognized cause. The how can be a bit elusive. Bringing people together for a celebration is one thing, but for social justice, now that’s just overwhelming! A baffling list of questions arises, namely where to start. Yet, after spending four months helping to put together The Left Forum, the largest gathering of Leftists in North America, I’m pleased to report it is just like throwing a party!

I stumbled into the Left Forum’s offices in December when I realized it was run out of a room just one story above the political science lounge of the CUNY Graduate Center, where I’m currently studying. My first feeling was alarm that the entire operation was organized by one humble, full-time coordinator, Seth Adler. Everyone else was enjoying the glamorous life of the unpaid internship, with the added benefit of being able to include the fact that they helped to bring together a mass conference of socialists on their resumes. Let’s just hope that we all apply for jobs in NGOs and academia.

My only real interest in assisting the forum was to promote the gathering through various social media outlets. I thought that I didn’t have the skills to do much else, but within a few weeks I had already gotten more than I asked for. I went from trying to generate a buzz on Twitter, to e-mailing top notch academics like Richard Wolff and Francis Fox Piven, who teaches at the Graduate Center. My days became brutally long, as my organizing duties for the forum were added to an already full agenda, including my part-time job, work with the Socialist Party, Occupy Wall Street, my doctoral studies, and did I mention I have a girlfriend? The compensation consisted of an infinite supply of Twizzlers and pretzels (compliments of Seth), and occasionally a theatrical performance by Dr. Stanley Aronowitz whenever anyone would leave the office too messy. (He would act out a mixture of Monty Python and Dante’s Inferno, entertaining but hellish to watch). I, on the other hand, was attempting a mixture of Che Guevara and Noam Chomsky, fiery militant with a scathing intellectual insight. I ended up being a mixture of exhausted, but fulfilled and would do it again in an instant.

This year’s forum brought in around 5,000 participants to weigh in on the theme “Confronting Global Capitalism”—a monumental success! It may come as a surprise that the entire conference was only put together by about 10 regular volunteers, with another 10 that orbited around the outskirts. With clear organizational methods, it is possible to replicate dozens of gatherings oriented towards action and networking all around the country. Here are some lessons I gleaned from the forum that I believe can guide us in the future:

1) Organize for social justice like you would throw a party. The hardest part of changing the status quo is beginning at the beginning and figuring out where to start. At the forum the beginning started in a very similar manner that throwing a party would: a bunch of people sat down with a general idea of what they wanted to do and made a list of activities and invites. The forum employed a massive array of communication mediums to rally participants to the event. For most of the forum I had a de facto monopoly on the social media apparatus; Facebook, Twitter, and blogs became the bread and butter of my daily organizing. Within a couple months, I had generated almost a thousand more follow-



ers of our social media channels, which gave activists updates on the event and a digital-communal space to network everything from housing to campaigns that individuals were working on. Besides event information, I made it a bi-weekly tradition to post “Your Leftist Humor of the Day”, which consisted of cartoons that quickly went viral.

Soon it became obvious that the outreach through Facebook was largely preaching to the converted: campus militants, union leaders, various Left parties and organizations, and of course, several hundred thousand of my personal friends in the OWS movement. It became clear that this anti-capitalist extravaganza was going to need to diversify its outreach if it wanted to reach the broader masses, which brings me to my second insight.

2) Crash other folks’ parties, but don’t co-opt them. The Left Forum is often critiqued for being too “heady,” an event with just a lot of intellectuals and battle-hardened activists sharing war stories. To help break this appearance and put theory into practice, I gladly immersed myself in some local struggles going on in the New York City area. The first rally I attended was to support the Transit Worker’s Union, whose benefits and wages were under attack by the incumbent administration. The workers were fiery (TWU is known for being one of the more militant NYC unions) and were glad to have the support of members of sibling unions and non-union members alike. Armed with my green TWU whistle and about three dozen brightly colored pamphlets advertising the forum, I

Continued on p15

Occupy Work – Fighting for Constitutional Rights in the Workplace

by Dan La Botz



Starting last September, Occupy Wall Street and then the Occupy movement across the country demanded our constitutional rights to freedom of assembly in public places and freedom of speech in our society. These rights are essential in order to challenge the power of the banks and corporations in our nation and the role of their money in politics. Although the U.S. Constitution itself is, as many scholars have argued, a fundamentally conservative document (written by the merchant and slave-owning elites of the early Republic to enhance and protect their wealth and power from ordinary Americans), the Bill of Rights was written by the

underdogs of that era—many of them artisans, workers, and small farmers. The Bill of Rights protects our democratic rights to assemble and speak out. Ironically, these fundamental rights in society hold no sway in the workplaces where we spend the greater part of our days.

My old friend and mentor Stan Weir, a socialist and a labor organizer most of his life, first pointed this out to me in the 1970s. Generally, you can hand out literature on the street, but not in the workplace; you can assemble in your community, but not on your job; you can speak out in the park—well, at least in theory—but you cannot speak out at work without fear of reprisal. There are some exceptions to this, in situations where one is either organizing a union or is a union member, in which case one can generally hand out literature at work but in non-work areas and only during non-work times like break, lunch, and before or after work. By and large, however, employers will discipline and perhaps fire workers who try to exercise their constitutional rights at work.

Unions are meant to protect our rights on the job and often call themselves “the workers’ voice on the job.” Few unions, however, ever actually fight for workers’ full Constitutional rights at work. (We will leave aside the right to carry a gun, thinking that taking guns into the contemporary American workplace is probably not a good idea). Some unions themselves, in fact, have at times colluded with employers to deny workers the right to express their opinion at work, especially if those workers were union dissidents. I know that from my own experience years ago as a member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) when Teamster union officials and company bosses often worked together to keep our members and our literature out of their trucking barns and warehouses.

Time for rights in the workplace

Occupy’s success in putting democracy back on America’s agenda leads me to believe that we might be able to change this situation over the long haul, but only if we were to start now, raising the idea of exercising our fundamental rights in the workplace, both as a strategy for organizing and as the prefiguration of a democratic socialist future. The Constitution and especially the Bill of Rights is generally held in high esteem by most American working people. Whatever they may know about its exact contents, most workers feel that it is part

of the American tradition to have the right to stand up and speak out about things. Believing in the American ideal of equality, most working people believe that their boss, though he or she may be wealthier and more powerful than they are, is not necessarily a better person. They also believe that they have the same rights as their boss does to speak their mind. Taking advantage of these deeply-held egalitarian and democratic ideals in the American working class, we should begin a campaign to demand our fundamental democratic rights in the workplace.

We might start to exercise our rights by first speaking about our rights. We could start this by taking the Bill of Rights to work and posting it on the bulletin board. We could print up copies and talk to our fellow workers about why these rights during the coffee break or over lunch. We might take in the United Nations's various declarations of rights—human rights, economic, social, and cultural rights. Depending on where you work, the mentality of your boss, and the attitudes of your coworkers you'll know best what is appropriate. So start slow, be low key, check in with others, and take care. Difficult as it might be at first, I believe that by beginning to talk about rights in the workplace we will be sowing the seeds for change in the future.

The impact of such a campaign

Discussions of our democratic rights at work based on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights might in some cases lead workers to decide that they need a union in their workplace to help defend them and their rights. Even where that doesn't happen, workers might begin to behave like a union—behavior that is called “protected concerted activity” in the National Labor Relations Act, offering some legal protection against employer reprisals. Once they begin talking about the rights at work, workers might decide that they want to exercise their rights to talk to the boss about the conditions of the restroom, the food in the lunch room, the shifts they have been given, the speed-up in their department, the lack of adequate health care benefits, their low wages, or their need for a permanent, full-time job.

Empowered by the sense that they are entitled to rights not only in society but in their workplace, workers might be emboldened to challenge management. Challenging management might also lead them to become more willing to challenge government policies. By blurring the distinction between the exercise of rights in the park and the workplace we persuade workers to exercise their rights on the job and encourage workers to come out and exercise those rights on the street and in the square. By blurring the distinction between worker and citizen, we suggest that workers—regardless of their legal status—should be full citizens at work, just as they should all be full citizens in society.

Prefiguring a democratic socialist society

As socialists, we envision a society where workers through the exercise of their democratic rights and their economic and political power will sweep away the company management, the great corporations, and the capitalist government. We foresee workers forming community and workplace councils that make all the important decisions about politics and the economy. We foresee workers exercising their right to speak out at work on issues, such as how investments should be made, how enterprises should be managed, what products should be produced, or what services should be provided. We foresee a democratic socialist society where workers' rights on the job form an important component of the larger democratic process.

The demand for our Constitutional rights on the job is a tool for organizing our coworkers, empowering and emboldening them to take action. At the same time it allows us and them to envision and to prefigure what a democratic socialist society might look like. Every time that we are able to organize ourselves democratically to take collective action, demanding our rights and confronting authority—whether the boss at work or the government in society—we are building a small freedom park, defending a little liberated zone, and constructing an alternative pole of workers' power.

Dan La Botz is a member of the Socialist Party and was the party's candidate for the U.S. Senate in Ohio in 2010.

Remembering Quinn Brisben

September 6, 1934 - April 17, 2012

by David McReynolds

Quinn Brisben was one of those wonderful rarities - a genuine Midwest radical. In the 1960's he threw himself into the Civil Rights movement, at a time and place where this took considerable courage. He was arrested and jailed in 1964 during the Mississippi Freedom Summer and was active in various Southern Christian Leadership Conference actions in Alabama from 1965 to 1967.

He was active in the Vietnam peace movement and in recent years had been very active in the disability rights movement. In fact, there were few (if any) progressive movements from the 1950's to his death in which he wasn't active.

He worked as a high school history and social studies teacher in Chicago's inner city for 30 years until he retired in 1990. Popular with his students, Quinn won several teaching awards. He was active in the teacher's union, and served on strike committees.

In 1976 he was the Socialist Party's candidate for Vice President and then, in 1992, he carried the Socialist Party's banner as its Presidential candidate. (His running mate was initially Bill Edwards, a trade unionist from the West Coast, who died during the campaign and was replaced by Barbara Garson).

Quinn began his 1992 Presidential campaign by serving three days in jail in Orlando, Florida, for taking part in an action in the struggle for those with disabilities. Earlier, in 1990, he helped smuggle 3,000 condoms into the USSR for the Moscow Lesbian and Gay Union.

His wife, Andrea, stood by him through these years of hard work, demonstrations and arrests. We remember the two of them from Socialist Party conventions, and somewhere in my stack of snapshots I have one of the two of them standing by the Socialist Party banner, with Quinn, his large hat in hand, ready to start a fund raising pitch.

Those fund raising pitches were famous - he kept that hat moving among the convention delegates until it was filled with bills. On one occasion when I was in Chicago for a Party event, Quinn delighted in leading us on a tour of the high points of radical history in the city, including the famous graves where leading radicals are buried. Quinn was such a fount of information and history that, once begun, he would continue, his story - and the history - branching to include all kinds of bits and pieces of information not to be found on websites.

Quinn was also a writer of poetry and prose - those writings can be found at: QuinnBrisben.com).

There was an unhappy side to Quinn's life - he suffered at times from depression, which could be acute. It is a great testimony to human will that, despite that problem, he was so active and on the front line of the great struggles of our time. Quinn was a large man, both in spirit and in body, and I suspect, was a much better candidate than I was, back in 1980. I was always a bit timid about approaching the media, but Quinn would walk into a newspaper office in some small town in Illinois, Iowa, or Oklahoma, and simply say, “Hi, I'm Quinn Brisben, the Socialist Party's candidate for President. I'd be happy to give your paper an interview”. And who could resist!

Within the Socialist Party, Quinn steered clear of internal fights and caucuses, doing his best to keep the Party active in the non-sectarian tradition of Gene Debs, Norman Thomas and Frank Zeidler.

Quinn will be missed, and remembered fondly by all who encountered him. We remember also his wife, Andrea, whose support was essential to Quinn.

David McReynolds was the SPUSA Presidential candidate in 1980 and 2000

Revitalizing the Los Angeles Local

By Lynn Lomibao & Mimi Soltysik



In 2010, we spent Halloween doing something radically different. Just days prior, Mimi had reached out to Greg Pason about how to get involved with the Socialist Party USA (SPUSA). Greg gave Mimi's information to Stewart Alexander, and Mimi and I met up with Stewart for dinner on October 31, 2010. Neither of us had any idea what to expect, so we came to the dinner open minded. Stewart on the other hand had a very specific purpose: He was looking for folks who were courageous and dedicated to lead a difficult undertaking—rebuilding SPUSA's Los Angeles local.

Neither of us had any idea what to do; we were both new members of the Socialist Party (SP) and had little political organizing experience. What we did have was tenacity. Although we were green (and weren't afraid to admit it), this helped us be open to trying things that worked in the past, while also figuring out new ways to organize that were very specific to our location and the cool people with whom we would eventually work. To use L.A. speak, this kind of "holistic" approach would eventually become critical to organizing the new local.

During that first meeting with Stewart, we learned that there was a young dude from Ventura who also wanted to know what was happening with the Socialist Party in California. That guy was Justin Simons. Later that evening, we got in touch with Justin, and scheduled another meeting with him and Stewart a couple of weeks later. When the five of us met, we laid out a plan that we could follow for the next six months. We wanted to establish an approved L.A. local and get the state chartered by mid-2011.

Today, California has three thriving locals: Los Angeles, Riverside, and the Bay Area. Two more locals are almost chartered in Ventura County and Orange County. The growth of the L.A. local specifically and the California membership in particular is due to

a mix of sheer—and sometimes naïve—optimism and sage advice from seasoned activists. It is also due to its attention to California culture and youth interests, strong relationships with likeminded activists, and the generosity and support from longtime members, both in California and nationwide. Here's how it all unfolded.

Forging key contacts

One of the most important things for us in rebuilding the L.A. local was reaching out to other party members. We started by going straight to one of the most visible members of the party, Greg Pason. Greg gave us a list of the California members and suggested a few people who might be interested in organizing. Those were the first people we called, and it was tough. No one knew who we were. But those calls eventually led to connections with two people: Michelle Borok in L.A. and Steve Clarke in Palm Springs. Both Michelle and Steve would become some of California's most ardent supporters and active organizers.

Michelle and Steve are longtime activists with years of experience. Their advice and direction were integral to the formation of our new local. Both had firsthand experience with the kind of things that worked (action, not just talk) and the things that didn't (action without some element of fun and friendship). Their insight to and connections with other activists and movements were also gold.

Justin's relationships with radical youth in L.A. and Ventura were equally pivotal. That dude knows everyone from every imaginable political organization, with acronyms that we still haven't deciphered to this day. He got young Socialists, Communists and Anarchists interested in our new organizing efforts, and many of them still come to our meetings.

Next, we reached out directly to people we knew best—our family and friends. Before we knew it there was a small team of folks assembled, and we were ready to hold our first meeting. We used Facebook to publicize that first meeting and build awareness about the newly forming local. Facebook has been one of the most important tools for our organizing; If we need to promote anything, including meetings, actions, and fundraising, Facebook is our go-to online resource.

Our first meeting took place at a local diner, and about 20 people showed up. We couldn't believe it. The people who came were an interesting mix of SP members, young radicals, anarchists, and folks who were interested in learning about socialism and getting politically involved.

By the time we scheduled our next meeting, we hit another stroke of luck. Maggie Phair, a longtime SP member and kickass activist, offered us the use of her office space. Bonzai! This helped us establish credibility and gives our local members a place to call home. It has also enabled us to develop close ties with the Peace and Freedom Party, with whom we share the office. Since then, we've been great buds with the P&F gang. Many of them are also now SP members.

Creating cool communications

After our first official meeting at the new office, when we held our first election, we decided to create a brochure specifically for the L.A. local. We called it "The Time Is Now". We wanted to present a really simple, yet inspiring message to potential members. Our goal with this piece is to pique people's interest in socialism, the party, and get them to contact us or attend a meeting. Because we live in a city where many people rely on and respond to symbols and icons, we made sure to put the revolution fist front and center. We hand these out at work, around our neighborhoods and at events. People love them.

We also created a website for the L.A. local, which we recently updated. Our Bay Area Local uses a similar format, which is great for building solidarity and also creating a recognizable image for people to connect with the socialist movement in California. Thanks to the generous support of two key L.A. local members--an amazing journalist and a wise, soft-spoken dean at the University of Southern California--we also created a four-color, glossy bookmark with the message, "We Are You." Like the brochure, and we hand out this bookmark everywhere—it's a fantastic piece to use for outreach because people remember it, they can use it, and they've reached out to us because of it.

Our public debut, California style

It didn't take long before California had another local. When you have people like Steve Clarke on your side, something's gonna happen. Through persistence and on-the-street actions, Steve established a local in one of the most unlikely places to have a socialist presence, Palm Springs. To celebrate our two locals, we wanted to do something special to coincide with the possible chartering of California. We thought it would be cool to bring someone special to Los Angeles for a speaking engagement, sponsored by the Socialist Party of California.

We wanted someone significant, who could inspire people to get badass. Who did something extraordinary for the people in California? Who had a history here that was mostly misunderstood? Who was a true badass? For us, it was obvious: Black Panther Party founding Chairman Bobby Seale. The Panthers made organizing feel good. They knew how to appeal to young people, and they were masters of messaging. Quickly, we raised the money through small email, direct mail and phone campaigns. Our members stepped up big time. Emil Berkanovic, a former Dean of Public Health at UCLA and our mentor, said "I don't care what you do, Seale the

deal!" In just a few days, we had enough funds raised to finalize an agreement with Bobby Seale.

Through Facebook, word-of-mouth, a radio promo and handing out fliers in neighborhoods all over L.A., we got over 125 people to attend the event. It was momentous.

Unfortunately, Emil passed away right before the Seale event, so he wasn't able to see California charter. We couldn't have done it without his support and fight. We know he would have been proud, and his memory pushes us on every day.

Keeping it fun

There's no ignoring the mellow, laid back, hippie culture that is Southern California. What's essential for keeping our members interested is to actually do things—to organize actions and to make those actions fun. Emil always stressed the importance of this. He used to say, "Make this cool. Make this fun. Let's make the Left attractive!" Justin Simons always says, "Socialism is sexy!" And another one of our key organizers, Andre Mahmoudian, knows how to put the "rad" into organizing. These are clues into California culture that we can't ignore. If we ignored them, we'd perish.

Putting on the Bobby Seale event meant a lot for establishing credibility, both outside of and within our local. Our members were excited to be part of something extraordinary. Since then, we've done a little bit of everything. We attend protests. We participated in Occupy L.A. In fact, one of the most fun times happened organically, after a night at Occupy. Justin, Chris, Mimi and I got something to eat in Little Tokyo and wound up at an arcade in a Japanese mall. We ate wicked cream puffs, told unlikely stories and cracked dirty jokes. This kind of bonding goes a long, long way for us.

Every month, we hold a "First Saturdays Socialist Social." Although the conversation inevitably turns to socialism, it doesn't have to. The point is to shoot the shit. Those who want to can drink. And a dance party is definitely in the cards. Oh yeah. We're also throwing ideas around for an organizing field trip, where a bunch of us travel around to different areas throughout the state to build membership. This is something that everyone in our local is really excited about.

But most of all, we laugh a lot and try to infuse a party feeling into everything we do. This past weekend, State Secretary Rich Fuller and Cindy Henderson from the Peace and Freedom Party joined us in the rain for some signature collecting, and a potentially miserable project became a huge laugh-fest. But hey, we got the signatures!

Fostering leadership

When we first got started, the thinking was we should be able to recruit 10,000 new members within one year. Of course, our enthusiasm showed just how naïve we were at the time to the realities of organizing.

California is a massive state with insane traffic, so practical travel to meet individual party members is pretty impractical. But we knew from the membership list that there were a few members in northern California, particularly the Bay Area.

Through networking, another young guy, from Alameda, popped up: Zac Goldstein. Like Justin and Andre, Zac was a ball of fire. Zac asked for the contact information of Bay Area party members, and was soon in touch with longtime party members, Tina Phillips and Antonio Salas. Tina and Antonio helped Zac get the ball rolling in the Bay Area. Before long, this group had chartered a Bay Area local, and it probably won't be long before the Bay Area Local becomes the biggest local in the state. They meet regularly, and are energetic and terribly bright.

Like us, Zac had never done this before. But we try to

Continued on p15

International Women's Day in Mongolia

by Michelle Borok



Everyday in Mongolia brings reminders of the Marxist-Leninist history here. It's recent, and it's still a part of day to day life, even as democracy, capitalism and an open society continue to change the way Mongolians live, work and govern.

Marrying into a Mongolian family gave me the privilege of taking part in a very special International Women's Day celebration for the matriarch of our family, referred to by the family as Emee (grandmother in Mongolian). The party was thrown on March 7th so that family could celebrate on the 8th in their own

homes.

Emee is the younger sister of my fiancée's mother, but sits at the head of the family with 9 children, almost 20 grandchildren, and many other family members that she helped raise as her own. She's a powerhouse. You go to Emee for clearance in all things – marriage, naming of children, where you should live – the big stuff. She consults with her lam (Buddhist monk) and weighs in. Her advice is sound, loving and well thought out.

Emee was widowed a decade ago and with the full time help of two of her unmarried daughters, and the part time and frequent help of her other children, nephews, nieces and sons and daughters in law, she continues to raise large herds of sheep, goats, cows and horses, and grow potatoes, hay, and onions. The family is solid, provided for, and she is at the center of all things.

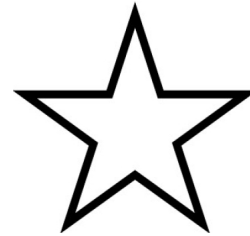
For Women's Day the Mongolian government continues the traditions that the Russians brought with them in the 1920s, and women are selected around the country and honored for their skills and services with plaques, medals and certificates. Russia was the first country to recognize the holiday as a national one, and Mongolians took to it, as the traditional culture has always placed mothers on a pedestal. There are countless folk, and even modern pop songs about mothers. Honoring mothers is as central to Mongolian identity as cherishing horses and blue skies. This year Emee received yet another award for being one of Mongolia's finest mothers and herdswomen. The family threw a party to celebrate.

A small village café was taken over and turned into a private reception hall. Boxes of fresh fruit, sweets, vodka, sodas, a three-tiered cake and a giant canister of airag (fermented mare's milk) were brought in for the event. Emee was seated at the head of the table, flanked by other elder women. I was given a seat of honor with them, maybe as the newest addition to the family, maybe because I'm the foreign novelty, or maybe because it was my first Women's Day. Whatever reason, I was completely humbled and cherished the honor. The party was several hours of eating, drinking, toasting, singing and being with the family. It ended with

karaoke in Mongolian and English. Pretty perfect by my standards...

This was a special day for one family in Mongolia. Not everyday is like this of course, and women across the board still earn less, hold fewer political offices than men (as opposed to 40% in Soviet times), and struggle with familiar gender imbalances in Mongolian society as we see in other parts of the world. Women have taken steps backwards as the Mongolian economy has "advanced". All the roses, vodka toasts and cakes on a holiday can't make up for the sacrifices women have made and are continuing to make in modern Mongolia.

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Democratic Socialism and May Day: Eyes on the Prize, Feet on the Ground

by Jim Marra



Most democratic socialists likely share Alice Walker's view that activism is the rent we pay "for living on this planet." The Socialist Party - USA's activism is based on this sense of obligation to the human community and the planet that nourishes it. The SP-USA Statement of Principles powerfully affirms that it strives "...to establish a radical democracy that places people's lives under their own control -- a non-racist, classless, feminist, socialist society in which people cooperate at work, at home, and in the community." (<http://socialistparty-usa.org/principles.html>) This visionary statement conjures a panorama of concrete political and social objectives. To attain these objectives, the party steadfastly maintains a commitment to a new vision of human relations. However, it also requires that party members participate in the real-world struggle to expunge the scourge of Capital.

The Socialist Party of Connecticut (SPCT) first participated in the New Haven May Day Celebration in 2007. At that time, members did not fully understand how to present most effectively the democratic socialist philosophy or fully reap concrete political benefits. However, with six years experience it is benefiting from lessons learned. The Local is now accomplished at keeping its public message relevant to current events, coordinating it with SP-USA principles, maintaining its presence at the celebration and improving relations with other activist groups.

Regarding the message, the SPCT's 2011 May Day Statement focused on the attack by Gov. Scott Walker on workers' collective-bargaining rights in Wisconsin and its implications for Connecticut.

"The Socialist Party of Connecticut stands in solidarity with the tens of thousands of Wisconsin citizens struggling against the anti-worker assault of the wealthy elite, and their Republican and Koch-Industries-funded Tea Party minions...Scott Walker is pursuing a dictatorial campaign intended to fracture the solidarity among union, non-union, public, private, poor, and middle-class workers."

"Here in Connecticut, Bob Rinker, the Executive Director of the CSEA SEIU Local 2001, recently stated that 'Connecticut is already the fifth leanest state in the country in terms of public spending. Meanwhile, the very rich pay less than half what the middle class pays in state and local taxes'."

"The SPCT stands for a democratic socialist society, one that demands complete economic, political, and social equality for all and demands secure collective bargaining rights, pensions, health-care benefits, and social security for Connecticut workers. It calls upon Democratic Governor Malloy to make the politically difficult decision to end tax loopholes for the wealthy and corporations and to insure that public services are provided to those who are in need."

This approach will continue in 2012. In Connecticut, as throughout the US, immigrant workers remain under unrelenting economic pressure and law- and immigration-enforcement terrorism. The SPCT will speak out strongly against ICE atrocities and the increasing inequality of income and educational opportunities.

It will support the Federal investigation of alleged widespread police violations of Hispanics' civil rights in East Haven. It will call for the full prosecution of all law-enforcement personnel involved. It will demand the immediate resignation of East Haven Mayor Joseph Maturo who, when asked how he planned to support the Latino community, said that he "might have tacos." (http://articles.courant.com/2012-01-26/news/hc-east-haven-mayor-tacos-0125-20120124_1_tacos-east-haven-mayor-police-officers)

Attacks on women's reproductive freedom provide rich ground for highlighting the sexism and patriarchy central to neoliberalism. The Local will condemn these attacks and the vile characterization of women's-rights advocates by media personalities such as Rush Limbaugh. This will provide an opportunity to publicize the SP-USA's statements on women's rights and to illuminate the Party's commitment to socialist feminism, featuring the work of the Women's Commission and the Feminist Practice Working Group.

At the event, the SPCT interacts with the New Haven community in a spirit of solidarity. Much lively conversation occurs among members and those who stop by its literature table. Discussions focus on women's reproductive rights, immigration policy, the current crisis of capitalism, and the wars and occupations in the Middle East. Regardless of the topic, the Local continues to educate and provide a tangible hope for a better future. Members establish new and strengthening relationships with other like-minded activist groups, including other socialist organizations. These relationships foster action on the ground. During 2011, members participated in the Hartford and New Haven Occupations, the Hartford "Bring the War Dollars Home" rally, and pro-worker- and pro-GLBTQ-rights demonstrations across the state.

Participation is also great fun. In 2010, Local Chair Todd Vachon performed with his alter ego Hip-Hop Band "Mista May Day" and livened up an already lively crowd. Members always offer assistance with event set-up and break down, and help serve free pizza and soft drinks at lunch. In 2009, I had the pleasure of speaking on behalf of the Local from the stage on the New Haven Green. Each year, the Celebration offers events, performances, art displays and tables to visit and enjoy.

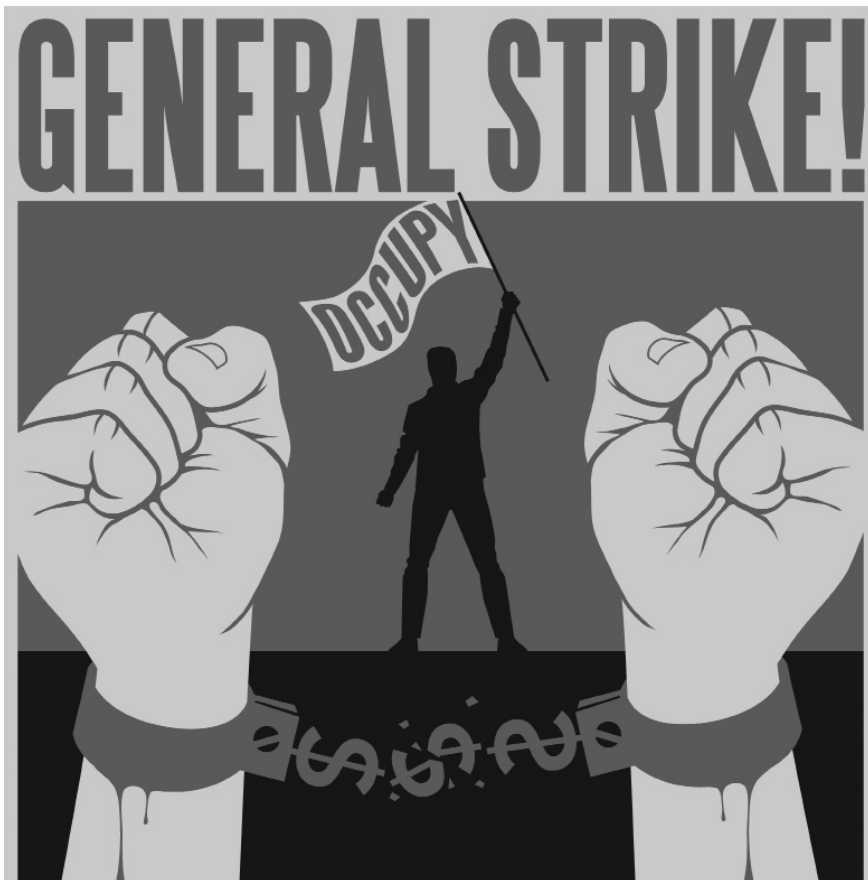
I encourage all locals to participate in or sponsor, with other left activist groups, a May Day event. Connecticut is fortunate to have a well-established New Haven May Day Celebration. Over the years, our local has established a friendly working relationship with Paula Panzarella and Jeff Spalter who provide their dedication and strong organizing skills to the New Haven May Day Committee.

Our planning on the ground has improved from experience. First, we begin planning as early as practicable. Event contact lists are updated, local members marshaled, the nature of our participation established (e.g. literature table, teach in etc.), associated costs and funding members identified, event planning and tasks determined, roles and responsibilities solidified, and materials and supplies determined and obtained. We always keep track of the planning items using an MS Word project-planning template.

In 2012, the SPCT will put its "boots on the ground" on the New Haven Green. It will march forward, along with other SP-USA locals and their activist partners, to achieve the prize of realizing a truly democratic socialist world.

Looking Forward This May Day

by the SPUSA National Action Committee



Most years, May Day is an opportunity for socialists to look backward. This year, thanks in large part to the appearance of Occupy Wall Street (OWS), we are looking forward. The future is, as it always has been, filled with both the treacherous pitfalls of capitalism and the glorious opportunities to create a world based on justice and equality. This May Day, Socialist Party USA members will take to the streets all over the country to offer a vision of another, better world, that is possible.

Clearly, OWS is a critical movement for the future of the Left in America. Socialists have important contributions to make to this movement. We can demonstrate the way in which political protest can be organized into multiple forms of resistance to the system. These include the spectacular direct actions carried out by Occupy along with community organizing, rank and file trade union organizing and even left independent electoral campaigning. Ultimately, the goal of our movement is to contest the influence of capitalism in every part of our lives. To help to inspire a movement capable of organizing a society based on grassroots democracy that makes sure that wealth is controlled by those who create it.

Simultaneously, Socialists can proudly proclaim our support for two ideas that have fueled Occupy – horizontalism and direct action. Democratic socialism is horizontalism. If, for a moment, we think backwards we will find that at the origins of the Socialist movement at the turn of the 20th century, anarchists and socialists worked closely together to create a vibrant anti-capitalist movement. Subsequent efforts at the “vertical” organization of socialism during the revolutions of the 20th century extinguished much of the

democratic impulse of early socialism. Those of us in the democratic socialist side of the movement have always kept this horizontal vision of early socialism alive. We share that value with Occupy and we should look to collaborate with other socialists interested in pushing this idea forward.

And, Socialist Party USA members have always been at the forefront of direct action initiatives. Non-violent civil disobedience has always been a hallmark of first, the Socialist Party of America and then the SP-USA. Think Eugene Debs protesting World War I, or A. Philip Randolph leading the Civil Rights movement or David McReynolds protesting the Vietnam War or, more recently, members of the SP-USA engaging in direct actions to protest war, or anti-union legislation. If horizontalism is our goal, non-violent civil disobedience is our democratic weapon to get there.

We will need all the momentum and enthusiasm that OWS has inspired, because in important ways the future also looks quite bleak. Capitalism has transitioned from the public looting that defined the immediate aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008 to the politics of austerity that are being imposed all over the world. Austerity has swept across Europe, decimating a once significant social safety net and driving millions

of people into unemployment and previously unheard of levels of deep poverty. The same is true in other parts of world, as capitalist governments roll back all manner of supports.

This global trend is sure to hit the US in a significant manner after the 2012 Presidential elections. Both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney have dedicated themselves to the politics of austerity. Romney with a cruel glee and Obama behind a public relations mask that offers empty claims of “hope” and “change.” Socialists can begin to resist this drive towards austerity today by involving themselves in local movements against budget cuts and by putting their energy into the Socialist Party Presidential campaign of Stewart Alexander and Alex Mendoza. Though the pair will not win the elections, their campaign represents the clearest socialist voice in the elections against the coming capitalist cutbacks. This effort should work seamlessly with the existing campaigns against the cuts.

So, on this May Day, Socialists can raise our banners high in the streets, we can join with the OWS protests and we can encourage others to join us in resistance. Though we can find inspiration and intellectual sustenance in the past, ours should be a movement with an eye toward the future. As the old Civil Rights slogan reminds us, “keep your eyes on the prize.” And, in this case, the prize is a new society where a job for all, housing for all, education for all and freedom for all becomes the norm.

Long live May Day!

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**HAPPY MAY DAY FROM
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Dear Readers,

We are writing to request your help. We live in truly revolutionary times. From Cairo's Tahrir Square to London's St Paul's Cathedral in London to New York's Zuccotti Park, people fed up with oligarchy are demanding fundamental changes in government and society at large. Democrats and Republicans are proposing serious cuts to Social

Security, Medicaid and Medicare. They have taken turns handing out public funds to the banks while ignoring the suffering of the unemployed. Wars and occupations have been passed smoothly from Bush to Obama.

From the beginning of this worldwide demand for change, the SPUSA has been at the forefront of the struggle. SPUSA Comrades have worked cooperatively with other activist organizations to form coalitions that magnify the movement's power while taking every opportunity to inform and educate people about the irreparable crisis that global capitalism now faces. "Democratic Socialism, Now!" is our call and this call will grow stronger throughout the upcoming election year of 2012.

These conditions make our independent Socialist magazine more important than ever. We need your help to keep this going. Over the past few years, The Socialist has published the writings of respected economist Rick Wolff of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, political activist "Peace Mom" Cindy Sheehan, and veteran labor activist Dan LaBotz. In addition to these high profile names, we have presented our readers with writings from dozens of grassroots activists on the frontline of labor struggles, socialist electoral campaigns, and anti-budget-cuts organizing. This is the unique contribution of The Socialist - it creates a media space where noted writers and activists can share print with grassroots voices struggling for change.

However, our costs are skyrocketing. We are committed to using unionized printers, but printing costs have risen as non-union shops force unionized worksites out. Mailing costs are also increasing, as state and federal budget cuts translate into higher postage rates.

Our current crisis is urgent. We need to raise \$5000 between now and the end of 2012 to cover the cost of publishing our paper. We are asking for your generous contribution to keep the Socialist Party's magazine afloat.

You can help by making a direct donation to the "Drive for Five" Campaign. Just go to <http://socialistparty-usa.org/contribute.html> and make a generous contribution today.

As you might know, six corporations own 90 percent of the media in the United States. No corporation owns The Socialist magazine. We depend on you to allow us to continue to speak truth to power in order to create a society based on socialist values of solidarity, compassion and justice. Thank you in advance for your support. Keep up the struggle!

Thanks You and Solidarity,
The Editorial Board
The Socialist

nuclear attack, *Lessons I Learned: Continued from p3*
but if you don't believe in breaking the law, come down to City Hall Park on the day of the Civil Defense Drill and show your support for those of us who are protesting by standing with us until the sirens sound - but when the sirens sound, take shelter and you won't have broken any law. If you think there are times when civil disobedience is justified, but for whatever reason you can't risk arrest that day - it doesn't matter the reason, whether you have a sick child at home, or you are a coward, or you just got a job and can't risk losing it - stand with us after the sirens sound and wait until the police order you to leave, and then leave. We will appreciate your standing with us as long as you can. Finally, if you feel this is the year you want to challenge the madness of the nuclear arms race, stay with us and accept arrest and the risk of a possible year in jail."

So we had three levels at which people could join. On the day of the demonstration, I had hoped we might have a hundred people, but we had a thousand, filling New York's City Hall Park. When the sirens sounded, everyone looked at everyone else and no one moved - there were enough people present to give everyone a little more courage. The police arrived and announced we would be arrested if we didn't leave. Then half the crowd retreated to the edge of the park, leaving several hundred still in the park. The police finally shouted over a bullhorn that everyone was under arrest - but they hadn't planned on anything like that many arrests, and as they moved through the crowd, the crowd itself began to sing patriotic songs. We hadn't planned on that - it was what Rosa Luxemburg would call the spontaneous mass in action. The people took the songs—"America the Beautiful", etc—and made them our own, singing them as the police gradually arrested about 50 people. Not one of those who was arrested had planned on being arrested!

We made a great fuss about the fact the police ignored those of us who had organized the demonstration and who were wearing armbands, so the next year when we did the same thing, and 2,000 people turned up (1962) the police immediately arrested all of us in the leadership. Foolishly, the small staff of the War Resisters League was all arrested—Jim Peck, Ralph DiGia and myself, so we had to spend 25 days in jail and the office had to be closed for a month. However, there was never another Civil Defense Drill!

I think that if we can get people to act together, they will bond with each other. A very good example of this was the arrest of several hundred people on the Brooklyn Bridge early on in the Occupy movement - and those arrests included dozens of members of our party.

My lesson is that Socialist Party groups should always, in addition to meetings, discussions, and social events plan actions that the whole group can take together. And as I watch our party grow and involve more youth, I know it is already doing this.

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could be, despite its crude form. *Occupy: Continued from p4*
But now, after the

brutality and forced removal of individuals and the destruction of the Occupy camps so pregnant with wonder and possibilities, where shall we go? It is important to remember that, while encampments were a physical monuments of the movement, they were not the only transformation of space to occur. When we protest with our signs and chants, when we stand before authority—which we ought to think of as the status quo—we are at once asserting the voice of the people into the public sphere, where it has largely been absent. The expression of popular discontent with “the way things are” is, indeed, a radical act. It disrupts the false peace that has obscured and suffocated democratic promise. It emerges as a dangerous disturbance to the political, social, and economic status quo. This is because the status quo can only be maintained if the broader public believes that there is no other alternative.

People have placed their hopes and their freedoms in the hands of politicians. The politicians have presented themselves as experts on the procurement and maintenance of freedom and justice. Yet, despite our “inalienable rights” to decide what is good for the general welfare and good of each of us, they have determined that they must speak for us. A movement like OWS exposes these contradictions. If allowed to reach full maturity through dialogue with all the oppressed peoples in our society, it would bring about the change our immoral and unjust society so desperately needs. As the old saying goes, “Out of the old comes the new.” With much struggle and much effort, we can build a new society that is truly democratic and free.

Beyond now

As society's institutions become more and more inaccessible to the great mass of society, people must speak out. The Occupy movement like all social movements represents one way people make their voices heard within a society of mass inequities and injustice. We cannot speak out effectively as individuals; we must speak as one voice. As the movement progresses, it has come to represent the first attempt in a very long time to enable individuals to speak out against injustice. Its continued progress rests on the ability of movement organizers and participants to create the “space” within the movement for people who have not been involved to become engaged. It rests on engaging with the most marginalized members of our society to create a movement that directly includes their daily struggle and helps to forge a larger more dynamic and critical democratic community.

But the greatest threat to the movement comes from its own inner contradictions. We cannot have a movement of the 99% that predominantly reflects the experiences of white middle-class males. The lived experiences of women, the working class, transgendered individuals, and men and women of color are vital this movement. And until relationships with community organizers and activists from those communities are prominent in the movement, the movement will remain a fledgling one at best.

Nevertheless I remain very hopeful. Already, committees and working groups have formed to address these issues. As the energy of the summer arises, I have no doubt that we shall see people working feverishly to rise to the challenges of our time. As new people come to participate in this movement, they come with their experiences, desires, and needs. And the movement will forever be transformed. But this is to be embraced not feared! Let us organize the unorganized!

dared the cold, made some friends, and marched with the workers while expressing my enthusiasm for their struggle, explaining the history and intention of the Left Forum. I was happy to see some of the members already knew about the forum, but I was happier a few months later to see some people there for the first time as a result of my flier.

This is a suggestion where the nuances are critical, as support can frequently look like co-option. The primary reason for attending another causes' rally should never be recruitment, but support from an ally cause. It sounds obvious, but for some nothing can be more annoying than marching against militarism, or for gay rights when "some socialist" slips one of their papers in their hands for no apparently related reason. The key to avoiding this is ranking the reasons that one is at an allied event: first, solidarity; second, friendship; and third, sharing the relevancy of the socialist cause to the one being fought for that particular day.

3) Make the "whole world watch." A central focus of the Left Forum was pre-conference media coverage. Needless to say, Fox News was not on our contact list. However, over the years the forum has compiled over 250 contacts in the media, which was no easy task. Most of the contacts are local radio stations and independent outlets of various sorts, the exact people most receptive to alternative social visions and ideas. Left Forum volunteers conducted countless interviews before and during the conference, which circulated on numerous public webcasts, local televised stations, and on the radio waves. Before I knew it I had become a local TV star after a public service announcement started to make the rounds on the Manhattan television waves.

The forum is known for having a fair amount of big names on the Left at its opening and closing plenaries, with a multitude of others in the 1,400 odd panels that are conducted every year. Instead of solely focusing on the Michael Moores of the world, we hit Zuccotti Park to conduct video interviews of the occupiers and get a sense of the movement in their own words. Those interviews quickly became YouTube sensations drawing more attention to both the forum and OWS.

Left Forum may appear like a well-oiled machine from the outside looking in, but behind the scenes it's creative chaos: events unfold organically around a general goal. With just a few weeks before the forum, rooms needed to be assigned for panels, a 120-page program guide needed to be compiled and printed, and volunteers needed to be assigned to a plethora of tasks. Using the system to beat the system became a reoccurring theme. The forum makes heavy use of Google's Gmail. Gmail allows for the creation of communal documents and calendar sharing, so we always knew what other volunteers were working on and where they were going to be on any particular day. Soon we found ourselves using the corporate giant to defeat... corporate giants. After a couple of work days that went past 3 a.m. everything was completed, just in time for the opening.

Of course, not all lessons from the forum are directly transferable, and not every event is going to draw 5,000 participants, nor feature Cornell West and the daughter of the late Malcolm X. Nevertheless, it did demonstrate how much appearance and outreach matters.

Most importantly, perhaps, is having time to unwind. To make sure that our volunteer work never turned into volunteerism the folks working on the project made it a weekly ritual to head to local bars and make sure the social revolution we were planning was as social as possible. In the final analysis, that's the key! Organizing is about outreach, networking, and friendship all occurring in front of the backdrop of agreed upon goals. When these variables come into play, then action unfolds naturally.

The Left Forum concluded with hundreds of activists

spilling into the streets of lower Manhattan to yet again reclaim our park, reminding me that organization is important, but we should always leave room for a bit of spontaneity. Once again, finding myself standing in the chilly night, inhaling the unique New York aroma of diesel fumes, cooking grease, and a touch of exhaust from the sewer, I had the distinct feeling of helping to make at least a small part of it all possible. The lessons from organizing should also be didactic, a chance to learn from others and about ourselves, but beyond building greater interpersonal relationships, it is also an opportunity to put ideas like grassroots democracy, consensus building, and non-commercial transaction into place. It all makes the path forward feel more real.

Civil society in general and the Left in particular will need all the experience it can get when it comes time to not to just organize an event, but to organize revolutions and reorganize society as a whole. Until those days are upon us, we should take seriously Antonio Gramsci's call: "Educate yourselves because we'll need all your intelligence. Stir yourselves because we'll need all your enthusiasm. Organize yourself because we'll need all your strength"1. That's the organization I'm looking most forward to, organizing a truly democratic society.

encourage every member who wants a leadership role to run with it.

LA Local : Continued from p9

Moving forward

The state has now been chartered for about nine months, and it has three locals with Ventura County and Orange County just about ready to hold their election meetings.

Through word of mouth and social media we're getting new members, with some frequency. It's nowhere near the 10,000, but they're coming in pretty regularly.

We send welcome emails to each new member, and we do our best to coordinate new members with the locals or near-locals that are closest to them. We reach out to new members in states throughout the west where no chartered state or local exists. We hit the streets as much as we can, talking to people about socialism, the party, and handing out literature. Our folks are active in their local Occupy movements and help us with organizing. We educate each other. We all kick in to help with dues when a potential new member wants to join but just can't swing the cash. It's a team and we're like brothers and sisters because we want to kick ass and have fun, you know?

We do want more. We do still want to see 10,000 dues paying members in California, and sooner rather than later. We want to see folks take local office, as some are now expressing an interest in doing.

Emil was right. The Panthers were rad with their messaging, and it showed in how the people responded to the message. We

SAVE THE DATE!

NATIONAL ORGANIZING CONFERENCE

JULY 27-29

MEMPHIS, TN

Socialist Party USA National Directory

ARIZONA

Socialist Party of Southern Arizona
www.spusa-az.org

CALIFORNIA

Socialist Party of California
PO Box 661483
Los Angeles, CA 90066
spusa.california@ca.rr.com

Bay Area Socialists

518 Holly Oak Lane
Alameda, CA 94502
info@bayareasocialists.org

Socialist Party of Los Angeles

c/o 2617 Hauser Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016
socialistparty-losangeleslocal.org

Riverside County

Socialist Party
c/o 40485 Murrieta Hot Springs R.#149
Murrieta, CA 92563

CONNECTICUT

Socialist Party of Connecticut
c/o 342 Westchester Rd
Colchester, CT 06415
www.socialistpartyct.org
SPCentralCT@gmail.com

ILLINOIS

Chicago Socialist Party
c/o PO Box 618124
Chicago, IL 60661-8124

INDIANA

Greater Indianapolis Socialist Party
c/o John Strinka
11218 Green St.
Carmel, IN 46033

KENTUCKY

Bluegrass Socialist Party
PO Box 786
Shelbyville KY 40066-0786
bluegrass.socialists@gmail.com

MASSACHUSETTS

Socialist Party of Massachusetts
www.spmassachusetts.org

Socialist Party of Boston

PO Box 15342
Boston, MA 02215
www.spboston.o

MICHIGAN

Socialist Party of Michigan
2937 E. Grand Boulevard, # 3
Detroit, MI 48202

Detroit Socialist Party

2937 E. Grand Boulevard, # 3
Detroit, MI 48202
detroit@spmichigan.org
www.detroitssocialistparty.org

NEBRASKA

Omaha Socialists
c/o 1009 Jones St #223
Omaha, NE 68102
omahasocialists@gmail.com

NEW JERSEY

Socialist Party of New Jersey
PO Box 457
Red Bank, NJ 07701
www.njsocialistparty.org

Northern New Jersey

Socialist Party
c/o PO Box 3056
Memorial Station
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043
www.njsocialistparty.org/northnj

Socialist Party of Greater Monmouth and Ocean Counties

c/o PO Box 457
Red Bank, NJ 07701
www.socialistpartymoc.org

NEW YORK

New York State Socialist Party
c/o 339 Lafayette St. #303
New York, NY 10012

Socialist Party of New York City

c/o 339 Lafayette St. #303
New York, NY 10012
www.spnyc.org

Socialist Party of Central New York

PO Box 35113
University Station
Syracuse, NY 13235

OHIO

Socialist Party of Ohio
c/o P.O. Box 770631
Lakewood, OH 44107-0031
www.socialistpartyofohio.com

Socialist Party of NE Ohio

socialistpartyneohio@yahoo.com

PENNSYLVANIA

Socialist Party of Allegheny County

c/o 725 S. Negley Ave. Apt. 9
Pittsburgh, PA 15232

Socialist Party of Philadelphia

P.O. Box 27562
Philadelphia, PA. 19118

TENNESSE

Memphis Socialist Party

PO Box 40723
Memphis, TN 38174
memphisocialist@yahoo.com
memphisocialists.blogspot.com

Greater Chattanooga Democratic Socialist Party

GCDSP c/o Shane Wilson
PO Box 2008
Hixson, TN 37343

TEXAS

Socialist Party of Texas

c/o 4202 Bluffpoint Rd.
Rowlett, TX 75088
spoftexas@sbcglobal.net
www.socialistpartyoftx.org

Partido Socialista de Valle

c/o 1012 West Warren St.
Pharr, TX 78577
www.socialistpartyrgv.blogspot.com/
sprgv@sbcglobal.net

Socialist Party of Dallas/ Fort Worth

c/o 4202 Bluffpoint Rd.
Rowlett, TX 75088
socialistparty.dfw@texas.usa.com

UTAH

Wasatch Socialist Party
www.utahsocialism.org

VERMONT

Brattleboro Area Local

71 Westminster Rd.
Putney, VT 05346

VIRGINIA

Socialist Party of Central Virginia

c/o 536 Meade Ave.
Charlottesville, Va 22902
www.spcva.org
spvirginia@comcast.net

WISCONSIN

Socialist Party of Wisconsin

1001 East Keefe
Milwaukee, WI 53212
414-332-0654
www.spwi.org

Socialist Party of Milwaukee County

1001 East Keefe
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Socialist Party of South Central Wisconsin

c/o David Williams
404 S. Park St. #2
Madison WI 53715

National Office
339 Lafayette St.
#303

New York, NY 10012
(212)-537-4728

natsec@socialistparty-usa.org

