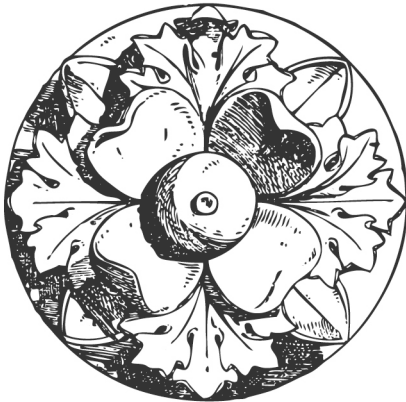
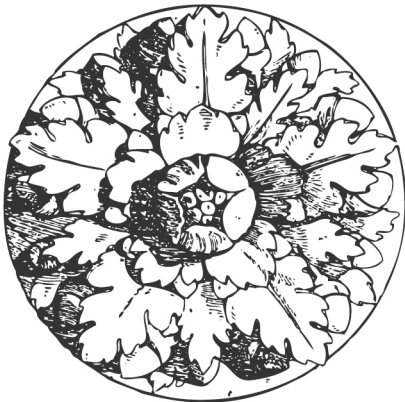
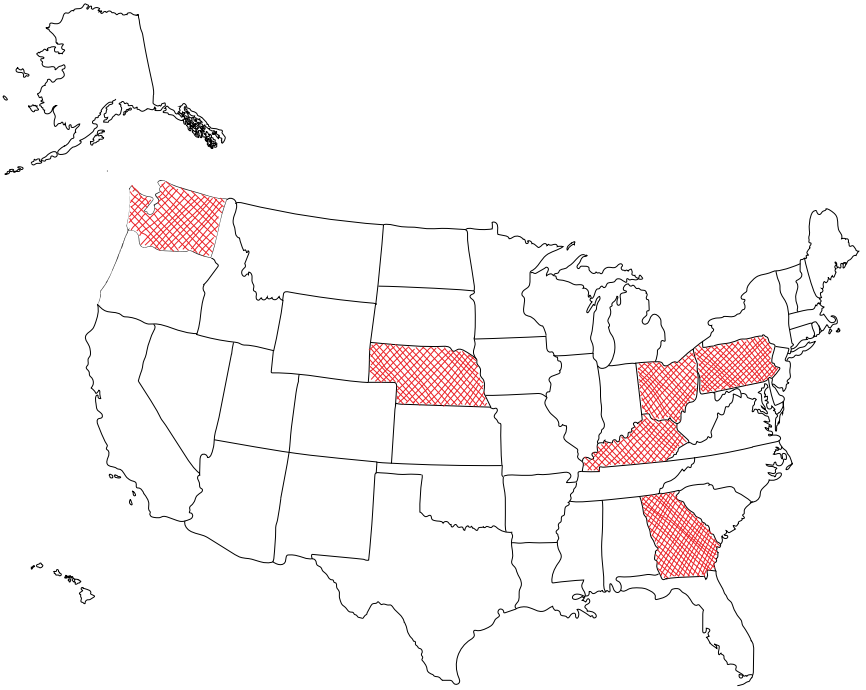


Build

issue two *september*





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Introduction

Rural, urban. Coasts, heartland. Red states, blue states. These geographical divides are social constructions loaded with assumptions. Their meanings collapse under the slightest examination. One of the best definitions of “rural” is a cascade: rural is any place with fewer people than where you are now. Large cities see exurbs see villages see farming communities see the wilderness as rural.

This atomization of place veils critical realities about society. A city can't exist without farms and farm communities. Rural people need support from urban money. Decisions made in corporate boardrooms affect the 250 people living in Shaktoolik, Alaska. Iowan farmers' pesticides flow into the watershed and eventually the ocean, affecting sea life, and eventually impacting Peruvian fishermen. We live in a global society, and our actions are deeply interlinked.

Capitalists understand this, and they exploit it by dividing cultures. Red states, blue states. Rural, urban. Our country, their country. Black, white. First world, third world. And yet, they're simultaneously working to homogenize our cultures.

Chicken is on track to soon become the most consumed protein in the world. In the United States, the vast majority of broiler chicken

production comes from four companies: Tyson, Pilgrim's, Sanderson Farms, and Perdue Foods. These companies own the chickens, the feed, and the antibiotics, the least capital-intensive aspects of farming, while externalizing the more unpredictable costs onto growers: the land, the fuel, and the labor. The Broiler Belt, primarily in the South, is home to thousands of growers forced to compete with their neighbors in "tournaments" for the payment of raised chickens so corrupt international meatpacking companies like Brazil's JBS can eke out a few more pennies per ounce.

The meat on your dinner plate is the product of a global system designed by international policies to keep the world's richest private companies, almost all in food production and distribution, at the top. They stay at the top through global empire, corruption, exploitation, and pollution. In a word, imperialism.

How do socialists respond? Demands like affordable housing and clean water are universal, even while being deeply embedded in local political terrain. We must see the wilderness and farmsteads, suburbs and cities, countries and the planet as parts of an artificially divided whole, each linked to another. Focusing solely on big "priorities" as discrete parts, rather than the system as a whole, is ignorant of how we relate to the power structures surrounding us. Because we each relate differently to the world, we must understand how these parts are pieces of the same overarching struggle.

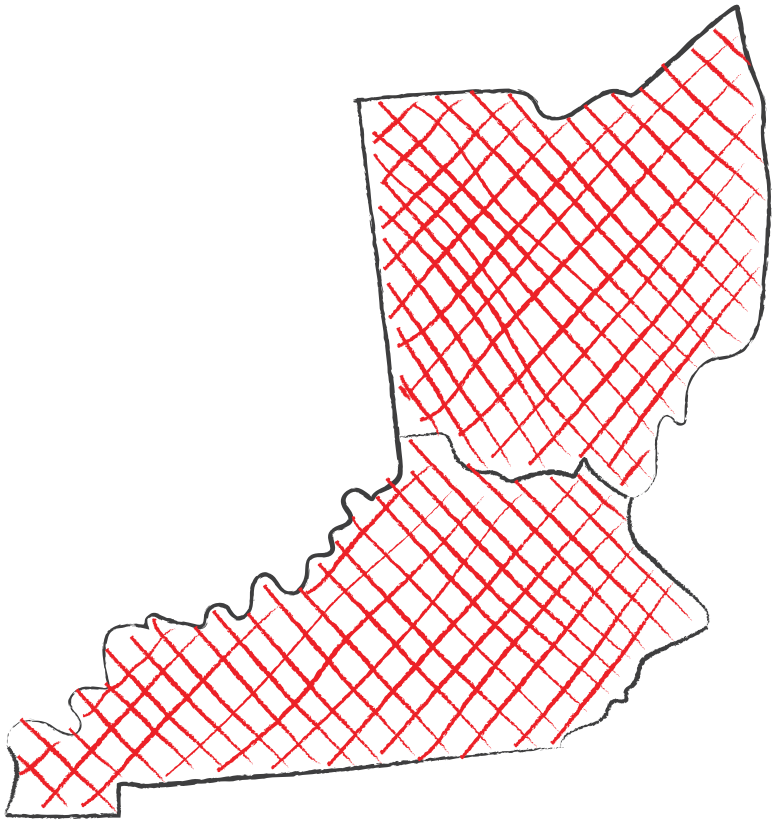
When we begin to grasp how these dots connect, we can begin to effectively coordinate and learn from each other across cities and regions. Despite our limited resources, we can identify the networks of capital across these divisions, and then strike back as a coordinated network, together.



Snaxis



is
Praxis



OHIO
KENTUCKY

Rust Belt Water Justice

Many of the most critical environmental justice issues within the Rust Belt concern water. While there is no single consensus definition of Rust Belt boundaries, most definitions of it roughly trace a region from Western New York to Eastern Wisconsin that have experienced manufacturing deindustrialization and population loss over the last several decades. The ongoing Flint lead poisoning catastrophe, arguably the most visible story, still resonates with some, but many would say even Flint has faded from national attention. Beyond Flint, Detroit's residents have experienced water shutoffs due to an inability to pay rates. Toledo suffered a three-day water outage when industrial agriculture in the water intake from Lake Erie caused severe algae blooms. Nestle recently won a major bid to increase its withdrawal from the Great Lakes to sell bottled water. Cities like Cincinnati, Louisville, Paducah, and our rural neighbors in-between may lose major Ohio River pollution control standards due to industry influence over the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO). As fracking booms in eastern Ohio, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania, every new well drilled consumes millions of gallons of water, and every pipeline built near a watershed threatens water safety with every leak.

Earlier this summer, DSA Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky started organizing around

ORSANCO's proposed deregulation of pollution control standards for the Ohio River. As we dug into the issue, we realized that water is a transboundary problem affecting our whole region, not just us in Cincinnati. In response, we created a proposal for a water justice workshop for the DSA Rust Belt Conference in Pittsburgh to share our concerns with other chapters. When we started talking water with our new comrades from across the region, we discovered many of the problems we face in Cincinnati - industrial drinking water pollution, outdated sewer infrastructure - exist all over the region. We co-facilitated the workshop with members of the Pittsburgh DSA Ecosocialist Committee, and began laying the groundwork to build a regional DSA water justice network.

Water rights must be a vital concern to all socialists. Access to clean water is a matter of racial justice, economic justice, health justice, gender justice, and environmental justice. All people need to drink water. As we heard in the cries for justice from the indigenous people of Standing Rock, "Water is life!"

In the last century of the United States, water has historically been provided through public infrastructures, and water sanitation was one of the earliest public services that local and regional governments provided. Early water sanitation efforts were introduced after thousands of people died due to preventable water-borne diseases, including major typhoid fever epidemics in cities like Pittsburgh. Water is a feminist issue because women shoulder the bulk of work in water-intensive caregiving activities, such as bathing others

and food preparation. Threats to water safety and access mirror larger corporate threats to society, as capitalists aided by legal authorities simultaneously destroy and privately partition the environment, while working people are left to clean up the mess.

Water access is threatened by not just pollution, but also corporate overuse of water. As water becomes scarcer in certain regions due to climate change induced drought, capitalists see an opportunity to privatize water provision. Across the Rust Belt, from urban areas such as Flint to rural areas such as those surrounding fracking sites in Pennsylvania, governments have responded to residents unable to access clean water with indifference. Because of this failure to provide clean water as a human right, residents must instead purchase water.

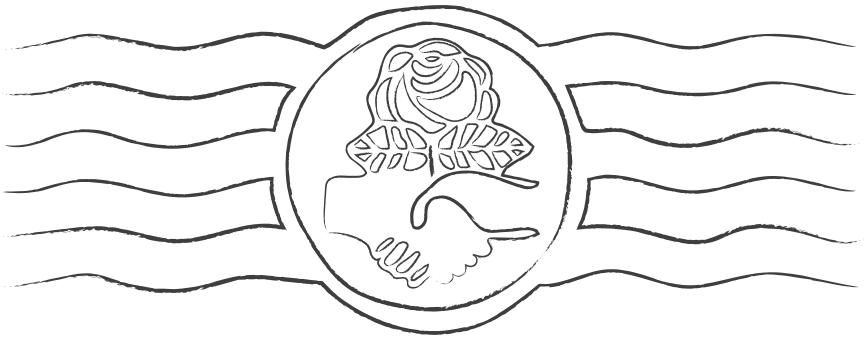
Water access is an inherently transboundary issue that does not neatly track political jurisdictions like state or city boundaries. Major watersheds in our region, such as the Great Lakes and the Ohio River cross multiple political boundaries. The role of indigenous water protectors trying to shut down Enbridge Line 5 that crosses both U.S. and Canadian boundaries demonstrates this issue vividly. Therefore, water issues call for a regional (and potentially international) response. We believe that DSA chapters across the Rust Belt can play an important role by developing a regional response network. DSA members are united across disparate areas by similar political outlooks and an understanding of the relationship between capitalist exploitation, environmental degradation, and the

degradation of vital resources as human rights.

What will this cross-chapter network look like in practice? While it will be up to member chapters to democratically decide strategy and tactics as developments on the ground unfold, there are many ways for us to multiply our power through collective action. As a first step, members of the water network could form a kind of information bureau to create and share analyses of often complex local water issues and power maps identifying major corporate and government players. Coordinated days of action, with local actions like protests and phone zaps happening under the umbrella of a region-wide media blitz would both enhance the visibility of DSA, and also act as a powerful piece of political education: while water issues often take on a hyper-local character, the underlying political-economic and environmental factors span across jurisdictional boundaries.

The Rust Belt is a water-rich region, but due to the collapse of public infrastructure and unmitigated corporate exploitation, our access to water is intensely threatened. We must confront the institutions complicit in the degradation of the environment with demands. Our demands must not only rein in the excesses of these institutions, but also demonstrate the inherent systemic contradictions that make these institutions incompatible with all life that depends on water. The only way we will win is by defeating capitalism and building a socialist world. Now is the time.

*by the DSA Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky
Environmental Justice Committee*



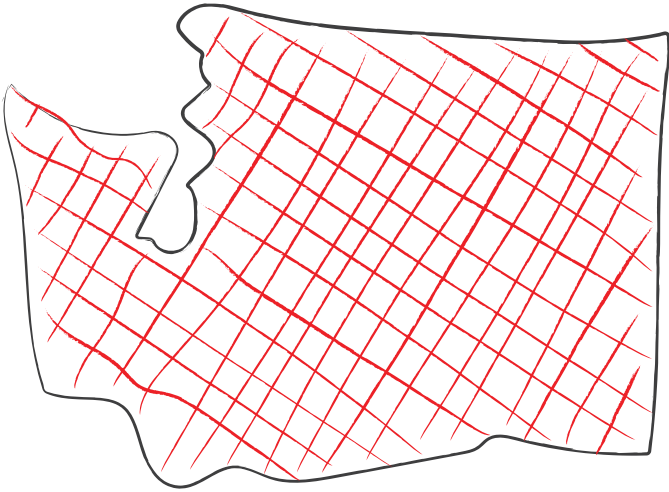


Socialist Sprouts at the Rust Belt Conference

It was so fun but I was the only 12 year old. I liked when we tie-dyed and I liked the food. I fell asleep during a movie and took a nap. I got to meet the little kids from Pittsburgh and I liked the people that were with us. I want to make slime next time and do more activities and go to a museum. And I would stay in a hotel that's close and not have to walk up hills that are very high. But I would want to do it again.

- Christy R-C, Northern Kentucky

Members of Pittsburgh DSA designed a child watch program called Socialist Sprouts to make meetings more inclusive to those with children. They have a guide available if you wish to build a Sprouts program in your own chapter. The guide can be found at bit.ly/soc-sprouts.



WASHINGTON

Tacoma: Tiki Tenants

On April 4th, the new landlord of the Tiki Apartments in Tacoma, Washington served tenants an eviction notice without warning. Tenants quickly organized, winning key victories and becoming a powerful movement in Tacoma politics in the process. DSA activists and rank-and-file members of the International Longshore & Warehouse Union are playing a key role in the fight for tenants' rights in Tacoma. C.M. Lewis interviewed Zack Pattin, Lead Organizer for South Sound DSA and a rank-and-file organizer in ILWU Local 23.

C.M.: How'd you get involved in DSA?

ZP: My union, the International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU), was one of the very few to endorse Bernie Sanders. Through the primary I met DSA folks active here in town. I joined after the inauguration and travel ban, when I saw thousands of young people signing up.

C.M.: Aside from Labor Working Group Chair, do you have any official roles in South Sound DSA?

ZP: I'm on the local Coordinating Committee, serving as Lead Organizer. I'm also a regional dues drive captain, helping assist some smaller chapters and OCs in Washington with keeping their membership up and growing. I'm active

in the DSLC Education Subcommittee at the national level as well.

C.M.: Recently, South Sound DSA was involved in organizing against evictions in the Tiki Apartments in Tacoma, eventually resulting in the creation of the Tacoma Tenants Organizing Committee. How did the campaign start?

ZP: The Tenants Union of Washington were some of the first folks down to the Tiki Apartments once the story broke. They knocked on doors and connected with the community before calling for a public meeting in the apartment courtyard on April 19th to address the situation.

Over 70 people lived there. Most of them were extremely low- and fixed-income folks, retired, disabled, with no place else to go. Rent was only about \$650 for many – half of what a one bedroom goes for in Tacoma. They got 25 days’ notice to be out and many would have been forced into homelessness.

Chad Duncan, who owns CWD Investments in Seattle, bought the place to remodel it and rent it back out for twice as much. Management didn’t tell any of the tenants they’d have to move within a couple months. They kept collecting rent and then abruptly taped notices to the doors. One woman had just moved in only eight days earlier with her kid, fleeing a dangerous ex-boyfriend.

C.M.: How did South Sound get involved?

ZP: A handful of people from South Sound DSA, ILWU Local 23, and several others turned out to the initial meeting. My friend Brian, another longshoreman, met up with me later and told me everything about it. He looked shell-shocked, just mentally and emotionally devastated. Everyone's testimony there, what they were going through and how much it hurt, how scared everyone was – it broke people's hearts.

Folks left that meeting with a plan to immediately start helping move tenants who had found new places, but couldn't afford a moving truck or were injured and couldn't pack on their own, and then march on the city council to demand the city do something about everything else.

We never discussed doing eviction blockades or anything like that. We're not opposed to it, but it wasn't on the tenants' minds, so we didn't propose it either. All they wanted was "more time and more money," so those were the demands: An extension on the move out date and financial support to get into a new place.

Some of us came back on Saturday to help Donna, one of the tenants, move out and into a new spot. When we were done with the move, we joined up with the Tenants Union and DSA to go door-to-door and build support for getting down to the next city council meeting. Afterward, a small group of us stood in the courtyard and talked next steps, how to

continue to highlight the issue, and build public support. That's how we started the Tiki Tenants Organizing Committee (TTOC).

We gave it a name and I went home, set up an email address and social media, and stayed up half the night making a flier and wrote this big Medium piece. I took inspiration for our "housing justice now" buttons from an old United Electrical Workers (UE) organizing drive button for plastic workers.

The overt nods to the labor movement, specifically a social, left-wing union like UE, that was deliberate. I wanted to connect something that looked familiar to an older generation, but also introduce a new concept to younger activists: That tenants' rights are workers' rights. And to also push back (before it even started) on any idea that we were just going to go out and "advocate" for tenants and housing. We're gonna organize, help center the tenants themselves right up front, and get into a durable organization much like a labor union.

C.M.: What are some of the difficulties and successes you've had so far? How have they helped refine your approach?

ZP: One of the toughest obstacles we've faced is that so many of the people who lived at the Tiki Apartments don't even live in Tacoma anymore. We don't want to just mobilize or advocate on behalf of a group. That's not our style. So, in trying to organize our community in a durable, lasting way, we're confronted with the very issue at the heart all this: displacement. We



HOUSING

JUSTICE

NOW

TACOMA TENANTS
ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE

haven't lost everyone that initially started going to meetings and fighting back, but it's an obstacle. So, we keep going where our people went. If they moved to Lakewood, we'll go pick them up and bring them to the next meeting back in Tacoma.

The silver lining is that all these down, militant tenants just got scattered across Tacoma and Pierce County. I know some are talking to neighbors in their new buildings and are still out there at bus stops and on the corner, leafleting for the next workshop or getting folks to sign petitions for Just Cause. We all came together, learned how to organize and build a movement in a small community, and now everyone's spread out, building it on a larger scale, taking it to another apartment building or neighborhood – like 'salting' as a union organizer.

Another upside on what made Tiki work, I think, was the architecture of the apartment complex itself and the kind of community it supported.

People look out for each other. When we'd meet in the courtyard, everyone saw us, and people came out, listened in for a minute and would then grab a chair from their kitchen, bring it outside and sit down. We can't count on recreating that kind of magic, those people and that community in that kind of place, but sure helped getting things going.

A lot of those folks have turned into local celebrities. People see them at the grocery

store and tell them they saw them on the news, standing up and fighting back. Our buttons have been a big part of our success too. They've caught folks' attention, people ask what it is, or they've already got word about it. The story broke wide open in the news and it's easy to ask, "Did you hear about the Tiki Apartments?" Everyone has, so starting a conversation about TTOC and the housing crisis is easy.

C.M.: The campaign has already had some successes. What do you see as the long-term goals?

ZP: Brian and I spend a lot of time thinking and talking about how we can continue to bring this struggle into relation with the labor movement. We've been reading Jane McAlevey's stuff on Stamford, Connecticut and "whole-worker" organizing, looking at our own union's history with building cooperative housing like ILWU Local 10 did with St. Francis Square in San Francisco, digging into the history of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and framing the issue in a way that resonates with union folks. Back in 1950, the ILWU's then Secretary-Treasurer, Louis Goldblatt, laid it out clear as day: For our members who rent, "a rent increase is a wage cut."

Unions get a lot of things for workers, but one of the most basic things unions fight for are good wages. The question we pose is: what good is all that if the landlord just takes it all? All those hard-fought gains at the bargaining table or on the shop floor – they're gone now. As trade unionists we should be deeply outraged

and offended by that. It also illustrates how confining the struggle to the workplace alone doesn't solve all our problems as working people.

“You got your work boss and you got your house boss.” That's how we frame it. Part of that is making clear the class politics of housing and talking about power. But it's also about meeting people where they're at and connecting the dots. That “two bosses” idea is straightforward, but it gets the gears turning.

The idea we're rolling around is about long-term organizing, broadly speaking, and how and where you learn to do it. If you can bring in the unions, they can teach their skills, share resources, and illustrate a model for tenant organizing based on workplace organizing – on another kind of union.

So what if you can learn it be an effective tenant organizer and then take those skills back to the workplace and organize there too? 90% of the US workforce is still on the outside, without a contract or a union to protect them. While Janus dealt a huge blow to the already organized, our solution to the problems we face is the same as it's always been: Organize the unorganized. Any opportunity we have to teach the organizing model, we gotta take it.

Socialist organizers have long been drawn to large-scale industry because it's both at the root of our oppression and also where you find the greatest concentrations of workers. Those concentrations are also found where we live.

That's where we need to be if we're gonna get organized.

C.M.: What do you think your chapter's experience with the Tiki Tenants Campaign has to offer for other DSA chapters to consider?

ZP: The fight for housing justice is humbling and an eye-opener. It's also crushingly bleak and depressing. If you take on this work, you're going to get angry. It will break your heart. It's exhausting, painful, and unglamorous work. You can talk and read all you want about displacement, health and healthcare, access and disability, poverty wages and the power of capital, but getting into the thick of it like we did is gonna change you and your local. All those abstractions about the issues are gonna go out the window if you're here in good faith, down here for the right reasons.

At that first meeting the Tenants Union called for, most of the community organizations and service providers that showed up made it clear they don't know what the hell they're doing. They hadn't even considered it. These tenants were frantic, panicking about what they were going to do, where they were going to go. People were scared they'd fall into homelessness – some of them had just gotten off the streets for the first time in years. But all these providers and faith groups? “Here, fill out this form.”

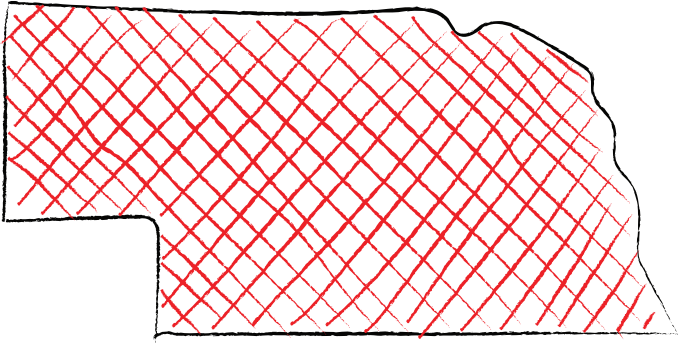
It's in their name – they provide a service – they're not actually here to change things or help build power for working people or even

include them in any kind of decision-making process. They dropped off their pamphlets and forms, then they left. People from the Tenants Union, DSA, the ILWU, and a few others actually stayed and talked to people, listened and heard them out about what they were going through and what they needed. Then we acted on it together.

My point in bringing all this up is that even if you're connecting the dots and thinking about power and the politics of housing, you can't just do something on others' behalf. You gotta root down and fight alongside the people.







NEBRASKA

Nebraska: The Red State

The hot August air was stifling as the sun beat down on Lincoln, Nebraska. The oppressive atmosphere was befitting. Like the rest of the country, Nebraska’s marginalized and working class communities are under assault by reactionary forces—attacks on healthcare, education, and women; ICE raids terrorizing communities and tearing apart families; and just last month, for the first time in 20 years and steered by the barbaric whims of its millionaire governor, the state executed a man. Despite these grim circumstances and the sweltering atmosphere, over 100 people gathered on a Saturday in the cool confines of Lincoln’s Unitarian Church: leftist thinkers, activists, organizers, and newcomers from all over the region. Together, they began creating a new vision of what it means to be a “red state.”

The first annual “Red State” Leftist Conference was the state’s largest explicit gathering of leftists in many decades. Nebraska DSA, Nebraska Left Coalition, Lincoln ISO, and the Black Cat House sponsored the one-day event. The purpose was to nurture unity and share ideas and strategies, all toward building a working-class movement that seeks to dismantle capitalism and other oppressive structures and shift power to the people.

The day kicked off with the panel: “What is the Red State?” Organizers Zac Echola, Jewel

Rodgers, Reed Underwood, and Rose Welch discussed the challenges and opportunities of organizing in the Midwest. Discussions ranged from tackling the town and country divide to organizing conversations and models for campaigns.

When contrasting organizing in the Midwest to the Coasts, Welch took what she acknowledged to be a controversial stance: “It’s a lot easier here.” She argued that here people actually show up. “There is a lot of opportunity here.”

Between panels, attendees came together in breakout workshops. Topics included post-Marxist thought, intersectionality, accountability and self-assessment, starting a radical space, one-on-one conversations, printmaking, and more. The scope and depth of the workshops reflected the breadth and diversity of the working class. It also reminded us how often capitalism limits our ability to express ourselves, even when we are with our comrades. Rarely are there settings where educators practice having a one-on-one with a steelworker. In one instance, in a workshop on Theatre of the Oppressed — a form of theatre designed to promote social and political change — attendees paired up and engaged in an exercise called “Columbian Hypnosis.” In this exercise, pairs took turns following the hand of their partner as closely as possible with their head. While a fun exercise, it also became a simple demonstration of how class conditions and power relations function.

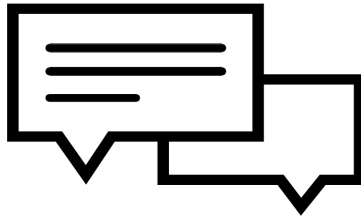
The second panel of the day was “Where Does the Red State Go from Here?” Three

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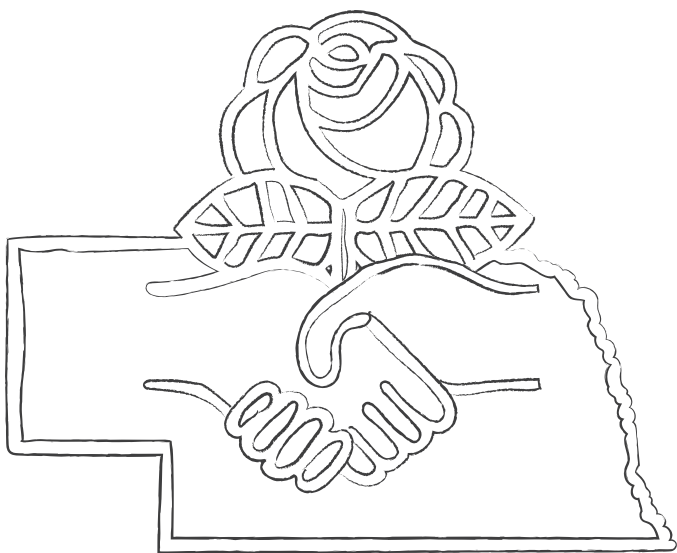


prominent organizers in the region — Hannah Allison, Amanda Huckins, and Brett O’Shea — discussed the future of building leftist power in the Midwest. The discussion included building a strong anti-fascist infrastructure, building dual power, left plurality, and sharing spaces.

“We have access to power,” Huckins told the crowd when explaining her housing work. “But we’re not using that power.” On a similar note, O’Shea explained the importance of leftists reaching out to the working class beyond their political bubble, namely the “depoliticized and the apolitical.” Occasionally the panelists disagreed, particularly along the question of electoral politics. But overall, it ended with an atmosphere of respect and unity, keeping in line with the purpose of the conference.

As the sun began to set and our part of the world slowly cooled, the attendees dispersed. But we had formed relationships, developed new ideas, and strengthened our collective resolve. One thing was certain: Nebraska is not beyond saving. On the contrary, it is just one spark away from a prairie fire.

The Red State conference began, as all things do, as little more than an idea. It was made not only possible, but monumentally successful, through the hard work and planning of many individuals and organizations. If you have any interest in organizing a regional conference in the model of Red State, contact DSA Lincoln at dsalincn@gmail.com. We’ll be here ready to organize with you, together.





THE SOUTH

The South: Pimento Cheese

In some ways, pimento cheese manages to capture the complexity of the South.

It's a dish that is uniquely Southern, but has thousands of subtle variations and nuances. Some people make it with cream cheese, others don't. Some use fresh pimentos, others use those that come in a jar. With onions, without them, with different combinations and quantities of spices, with secret ingredients, and with different brands of mayonnaise.

It's a cheap and simple dish to make and it gets better as it sits and the flavors blend together. It's great as the filling of a sandwich with a tomato, or as a snack on some crackers or celery. Some people, (mostly pompous food writers) call it the *pâte* of the South, but mostly we just call it lunch.

The recipe I make is based on one provided by Duke's Mayonnaise, which is what most people in the Carolinas go with if they're getting mayo and not making it themselves. I understand that other parts of the South prefer Hellmann's. I do not understand why they prefer it, but I understand that they do.

(If you use Miracle Whip I will show up at your front door to have a conversation with you about your sin against all that is good and decent)

As far as cheese choice goes, historically hoop cheese was used, which is sort of a mild cheddar in flavor. If you can't find it, mild cheddar works just fine. You'll also want to throw a sharp cheddar in to add to the complexity of the dish. Never use pre-grated cheese. It's dusted with cornstarch to keep the bits of cheese from sticking together and will dry out your bowl of pimento cheese.

As far as peppers go, I use the canned peppers because I can't be bothered to blister, peel, and clean fresh pimentos. If you want to, though, broil whole pimentos on a baking sheet, being sure to flip them so that all sides blister and char properly, then put them in a bowl with an airtight lid to let them steam until cool. When they are safe to handle, slip off the charred exterior and clean out the membrane and seeds. Then chunk them into small pieces.

More than anything, the simplicity of the dish lends itself well to experimentation. Want some more heat in yours? Broil up some Carolina Reaper peppers and throw them in with the pimentos. Want a different type of cheese? Go right ahead. Throw in more spices? Absolutely. More the merrier.

Just don't use Miracle Whip. Seriously.

by Bryan C., NC Piedmont DSA

Pimento Cheese

Equipment needed:

- Chef's knife
- cutting board
- cheese grater
- bowl with a lid
- spatula
- spice grinder

Ingredients:

- 12 ounces of hoop cheese
- 12 ounces of sharp white cheddar
- 4 ounce jar of pimento peppers
- Mayonnaise (you will use approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, but less might be needed. See instructions)
- Spices to taste (I add cayenne, black pepper, a couple of dashes of Texas Pete hot sauce, a secret ingredient, and a teaspoon of ground mustard)

Directions:

Grate up all your cheese and set it aside. Open the jar of pimentos and drain them in a mesh strainer, then chop them up and add to the mixing bowl.

Add the cheese to the bowl, and start adding the mayonnaise in increments a bit at a time, mixing thoroughly with the spatula. Keep adding mayo until it reaches a paste-like consistency. It should spread easily but be slightly stiff.

Add in your spices to the bowl and mix, tasting a small amount from time to time to make sure you have the flavors you're looking for.

Let sit for eight hours at a minimum in the refrigerator before serving. Overnight is better.

Enjoy with company!



GEORGIA

Georgia Tech

Editor's Comment: This is an origin story. The students, who formed the Young Democratic Socialists of America at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, were moved to action by the long standing crisis of sexual violence on university campuses and the community at large and the misogynist, punitive activities of conservative politicians.

Content warning: This story involves the aftermath of sexual assault and rape.

In the fall of 2015, Georgia Tech expelled two students it found responsible for rape. Both students responded by suing the school. Because Georgia Tech is a public university, the Attorney General took over the litigation and quickly settled the case. However, in both cases, the findings of responsibility were not overturned, meaning that both students were in fact found responsible for rape on campus. This caught the attention of a state legislator, Representative Earl Ehrhart, who was greatly upset by what he viewed to be a lack of due process on campus. Late in the Spring of 2016, Ehrhart attempted to force the president of the university to resign and, as the Chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on higher education, slashed \$47 million from Georgia Tech's budget for "ruining young men's lives."

This legislative bullying by conservative

representatives set the stage for many survivor advocates at Georgia Tech. It was apparent that the Georgia state legislature would consider measures which would protect rapists on campus; how could we stop them?

In the Spring of 2017, Representative Ehrhart introduced House Bill 51, which aimed to eliminate campus investigations altogether by instituting mandatory police reporting. If any university employee, including RAs and campus advocates for victim/survivors, were to hear about any potential felony, including sexual assault, they would be forced to report it to the police. Nearly every campus safety advocacy group denounced the bill, calling its premise “completely ridiculous” for several reasons.

One such reason was highlighted by an investigative piece in the Atlanta Journal Constitution: between January of 2010 and December of 2014, there were 152 allegations of rapes and sodomy on Georgia Universities¹ logged with police officials. None of those allegations resulted in criminal prosecution, leaving many to believe that police involvement would be counterproductive to ending rape on campus. Another reason was that the bill conflicted with the now-rescinded Obama-Era regulations which required schools to identify confidential school resources including dedicated victim-advocates for survivors to speak to. If House Bill 51 became law, establishing confidential resources would be impossible, as all school employees would be

1. <https://www.myajc.com/news/georgia-colleges-allegations-rape-but-prosecutions/gSBkgfxrYjGtZ4urWN6OnJ/>

required to report any details of suspected sexual assault to police. As such, the bill, if enacted into law, would inevitably cause substantial litigation between the state of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Education, likely resulting in a significant amount of state taxpayer money being spent on defending an extremely unpopular piece of policy. Or even worse, it could have resulted in a court ruling that the Department's regulatory protections for survivors are unconstitutional which would result in a serious blow for survivor advocacy not just in Georgia, but nationwide. Nonetheless, because of Representative Ehrhart's clout, it was clear that the bill would pass in the House chamber of the legislature.

This was when a group of students at Georgia Tech got together to discuss what could be done to stop this bill, and a plan was born. A march would be organized on campus that would take the mile or so walk downtown to the Georgia Capitol building. At the building, speeches would be given by the students, with preference to survivors. After that, the students would approach state senators to lobby them face-to-face. Since the House was fully committed to passing the bill, the bill would have to be killed in the senate. Hopefully a large crowd of student marchers directly facing each senator in person could sway their opinions, despite the Republicans having a supermajority in the chamber.

The plan worked. Only about 100 students showed up, which would be considered a small number if the direct action was only a march.

But when the roughly 100 students marched into the capitol and directly confronted the senators -- well, the looks on the faces of the politicians said it all. While huge crowds of protestors are fairly common in D.C. politics, this is not the case in the Georgia state legislature. The sight of 100 college students dressed in casual clothing *demanding* that the senators do much better, instead of the typical room of paid lobbyists, clearly made an impression. At the next Senate Judiciary Committee meeting, the senators tabled the bill, killing any chance that mandatory police reporting would become law, despite the clear dismay of Representative Ehrhart and the rest of the House Republicans.

The students who organized the march stayed together. It was clear that the school really needed more student involvement and campus organizing if it was to defend itself from the right-wing agenda of punishing the survivors of sexual violence through malicious, reactionary policies, such as the mandatory reporting bill. The students created a new student organization which would hopefully become a hub for organizing on campus, and for future students to learn how to become the future organizers which the school had badly needed. With that mission, the Young Democratic Socialists of America at Georgia Tech was formed.

by Matthew Wolfson, YDSA Georgia Tech



Little or nothing.
So many of us!
So many of us!

We are shelves, we are
Tables, we are meek,
We are edible,

Nudgers and shovers
In spite of ourselves.
Our kind multiplies:

We shall by morning
Inherit the earth.
Our foot's in the door.

-Sylvia Plath
"Mushrooms"

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