

Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky Socialist Agitator

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The Uptown Branch

By Molly S and Kyle F



With the Northside area long having a diverse, working class, and arts-driven community, and Clifton being home to a youthful and vibrant college populace, a fertile breeding ground for leftist activity has emerged. The formation of a neighborhood-oriented body is an integral component to representation, recruitment, and the advancement of a socialist future. In this vein, the formation of the Uptown Working Group is underway. We have every intention of becoming a functioning and active Branch, with aspirations that this structure is one that can bring further victories moving forward.

The notion is to expand upon the valiant, and largely successful, efforts of our comrades in Northern Kentucky neighborhoods. The Uptown Working Group came about when a few dedicated members of the Chapter pondered the best tactics to turn one of the more left-leaning areas of the city Red. Blossoming into hours of comradely discussion and debate, it became increasingly clear to us that the only way to win this task was using the full might of DSA Cincy and harness it into the places we love living.

Regionally-focused Branches will serve our Chapter in a way distinctly different from the capacity of committees and caucuses. Fostering a flourishing relationship between Branches and Committees/Caucuses creates a symbiotic environment where Committees can provide work, and Branches can be on the ground support.

Con't. on Page 4.

Sewer Justice

By Eira T and Kevin H



"Our Sewers Are Killing Us And We Can't Even Afford It" begins Communities United for Action's (CUFA's) recently released Sewer Justice Platform.

The statement highlights two fundamental problems CUFA members are working to resolve. On one hand, there have been hundreds of sewer backups in residents' basements across Hamilton County, leading to untold counts of illness. On the other hand, sewer rates have increased by more than 200% in the last two decades. Because water and sewer services are paid for on the same bill, when someone can't afford one of them, both services are terminated.

"People are losing access to water and everyone needs water to live," stated CUFA member Wanda Ball. In 2017, 8,316 households had their water shut off due to non-payment. Hamilton County Commissioners committed to CUFA to implement a Customer Assistance Program (CAP) in January of 2019, but the Commissioners say that a state law must be changed to include low-income residents in a CAP.

In addition to the crisis of affordability, the sewers are overflowing with sewage. Each year, MSD spews 11.5 billion gallons of raw sewage from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) into our yards and waterways.

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These Months In Local Leftist History

By Brendan F

On October 16, 1859, radical abolitionist preacher John Brown led his raid on the federal armory at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. His goal was to begin a mass slave revolt and overthrow the institution of slavery in the United States, but due to poor planning and overwhelming odds both the raid and the planned insurrection failed. Stories of the bloodshed rippled across the country, impacting different audiences in different ways. Racists and those invested in maintaining the existing social order spread horrifying tales of Brown and his black comrades' savagery, a distortion that has endured to this day. Abolitionist movements also grappled with the event, in more and less radical ways.

Cincinnati at this time was as racist as you would expect a city bordering the antebellum South to be. But it was also an immigrant stronghold and many of its newer European residents were refugees from the great revolutions of 1848, including a substantial number of Germans.

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Upcoming December & January Events

12/9/18 - DSA December General Meeting

12/15/18 - DSA Health Justice Meeting

12/16/18 - DSA NKY Branch Meeting

1/12/19 - DSA Rosa Luxemburg Social*

(*tentative date)

#cancelKavanaugh

By Rose C



On Thursday October 4, 2018 members of the Metro Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Chapter of the DSA joined with local comrades from the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Socialist Alternative (SA) to organize a rally at the Hamilton County Courthouse opposing the appointment of Brett Kavanaugh to the US Supreme Court. A member of each organization spoke before a crowd of over a hundred gathered in the rain, as did leaders from Planned Parenthood and the AFL-CIO. A second courthouse rally with dozens of attendees was held by the same coalition of socialist organizations in the hours leading up to the senate confirmation vote that Saturday. I spoke on behalf of our chapter at both rallies and my statement follows:

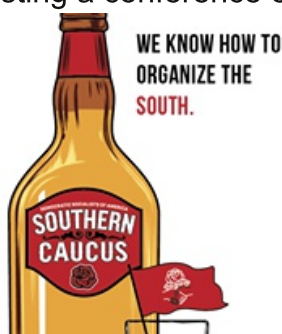
I am Rose Curtin from the Democratic Socialists of America Metro Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky chapter and that chapter's Socialist Feminist Branch. I'm grateful to stand in solidarity with all of you this evening. I've been thinking about Christine Blasey Ford's striking line about the clearest memory from her assault: "Indelible in the hippocampus is the laughter, the uproarious laughter between the two. And their having fun at my expense."

Con't. on Page 6.

DSA Southern Caucus Conference

By Simon P

As has been widely noted, the Rust Belt chapters of DSA organized a highly successful regional conference this past August in Pittsburgh, the first of its kind within the organization. The possibility of regional formations coming together and combining organizing efforts independent of national is perhaps the most exciting milestone within DSA since the membership surge, and it was thrilling to find out, just days after returning home, that the Southern Caucus would be hosting a conference of its own early next year.



and having a venue to share and learn from each other, without the influence of a national structure still largely built to handle a membership of around 5000, will be essential in strengthening ourselves locally, as well as preparing for next summer's national convention.

DSA, as an organization still attempting to define itself in pretty much every way, has taken to organizing a fair amount of regional meetups in the past year. These gatherings have largely taken the form of trainings packaged by national with invitations extended to chapter leadership, and usually taking place over the course of a weekend. The Rust Belt Conference, the largest and most buzzed about regional conference ever hosted within the organization was almost completely funded and coordinated by the chapters themselves. Our chapter had over 20 members attend. Daniel M wrote a reflection piece on the conference in the last issue of our newsletter.

Prior to the Rust Belt Conference, there were no existing forums for discussion between chapters in the region, however chapters in the Southern Caucus have been communicating...
Con't. on Page 7.

Medicare For All Canvassing

By Reg D



Since DSA Cincy's Medicare for All Campaign began in April we've canvassed in Northside, Covington, Newport, West Price Hill and Forest Park. We've met grandmothers concerned about the healthcare of their kids and grandkids, workers with good healthcare insurance but ready to sign our pledge sheet, community activists ready to cheer us on, retired people satisfied with their Medicare benefits, and others rushing to work with no time to talk.

While a few oppose M4A, most have never heard of it. Yet they talked about their struggles with the healthcare system. One person actively conversed but wasn't ready to sign, we'd guess because his immigration status made him hesitant to sign anything. We talked on the porch with another man, a retiree, who definitely supported the cause but didn't think taxing the rich was a way to fund M4A. Some talked about the immediate needs of their neighborhood; a few expressed disgust with neighbors who didn't keep up their places and, in their view, just lived off the government. Needless to say, they didn't sign the petition. But they were by far the minority.

After introductions, we ask people what they know and think about Medicare. While there are complaints, most see it as a positive program. With that we talk about expanding it to everyone while making it better. For most people, the appeal is no more co-pays, premiums and deductibles. No uncovered services and broader coverage, including dental, vision, mental health services. We would all get full medical care when we need it.
Con't. on Page 7.

October 2018 Brake Light Clinic

By Patrick H

A dozen comrades mobilized on Oct. 16th for the Chapter's second-ever Brake Light Clinic. The clinic took place at a local venue where immigrant families were gathering to make use of Cincinnati's MARCC ID* program in a drive organized by Su Casa, a service organization that has long been providing education, language, employment, and healthcare services as well as material goods to local people in need. DSA organizers changed brake lights and distributed food, clothes, toys, and diapers donated by a local church.

Why change brake lights? Not only is this a direct public service, connecting resources and trained assistance with folks in need, but the Brake Light Clinic concept serves to provide a jumping-off point for a greater conversation about the relationship that working people have with the police. Police interactions under the premise of 'public safety' that, due to the initial lack of a few spare dollars or the time and know-how to perform a brake light change, could escalate to a ticket, vehicle search, arrest, deportation, or jail. In certain jurisdictions in the tri-state police are turning over undocumented people to ICE. The MARCC ID program and the brake light clinic attack that horrifying scenario from different sides.

Another vein of these escalations happened in 2015, when officer Ray Tensing of the University of Cincinnati police department shot and killed Sam DuBose, an unarmed black man, after initially stopping him for not having a front license plate on his car. The killing of DuBose and ensuing years of street demonstrations and demands for justice centered around the specific fact that an already-tense traffic stop has a much higher chance of severe consequences for our black and brown neighbors as well as those who otherwise belong to oppressed groups. The DSA recognizes that these overlapping systems of oppression are brought to a head in the specific instance of a traffic stop, but that the real problems are systemic.

Con't on Page 8.

THE UPTOWN BRANCH - CON'T.

Branches create a landing pad of sorts for our newest members, and a place for inactive "paper members" to find a seat at the table to begin their own engagement with the struggle. Folks who may ascribe to socialist politics yet are experiencing hesitation about joining our organization will have those uncertainties decimated knowing they will be immediately welcomed to the fight by the people they see at the bank or dog park. The task can feel daunting, where do we begin the work? Why not in the places we have already laid our roots? As these numbers grow, geographically-focused branches can use the consistency of members to make significant impact in places like community council meetings, tabling in public spaces, and simply co-existing in our living environments. Our position as a big-tent, multi-tendency organization is additionally supported by the concept of focusing our efforts in our unique, diverse neighborhoods.

When the work is as centralized as possible, DSA will never be out of sight, and therefore, never out of mind. A solid presence in building solidarity, getting work done, and having fruitful conversations with folks can break down the stigma that socialists are scary. We're neighbors, friends, and will be comrades.

We have wasted no time finding great places to get our toes wet with this initiative. Northside and Clifton can be categorized as food deserts being ravaged by the egregious obliteration of public space, all the while staving off aggressive gentrification. Supporting existing measures to establish a union-run grocery co-op and the reinstatement of beloved sidewalk benches are low-key, accessible ways to begin combating the toxic forces of capitalism. These actions, paired with hosting the Bread & Roses potluck dinners (formally, and wonderfully, done by our Conduct Committee) and public-faced social events are, we feel, the best practice to engage existing members and embolden a dynamic recruitment strategy.

The formation of this eventual Branch could not be happening at a more opportune time in our community. **Con't. on Page 5.**

SEWER JUSTICE - CON'T.

...(Combined sewer systems are sewers that are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. During heavy rainfall or snowmelt, these systems will overflow, discharging excess wastewater directly to nearby streams, rivers, or other water bodies. This is a CSO). Cincinnati Children's Hospital found that these overflows severely impact community health. Researchers studied emergency room records and found increased hospital visits related to asthma, gastrointestinal issues and skin and soft tissue infections in children living within 500 yards of a CSO. Hundreds of people, including many CUFA members, have had sewage back up in their homes, causing them to be mere feet away from untreated sewage. Anecdotal evidence has shown negative health consequences from these backups as well.

In response to these twin crises, CUFA has released its Sewer Justice Platform. In announcing the platform, CUFA Board Member Erica Johnson stated "Communities United For Action is releasing the People's Sewer Justice Platform to provide solutions to public officials and administrators for some of the issues our communities are facing with our county-wide water and sewer system. The solutions require transparency, accountability, fiscal oversight and service to ratepayers."

The platform has a number of specific demands. It calls for more transparency and public oversight, an improved sewer backup response program, and a customer assistance program to make rates more affordable.

This campaign offers several important insights that we as socialists can learn from. First of all, it's not enough to municipalize a necessary service in order for it to serve the people it's charging rates from; what's required is full democratization. Clear, transparent reporting and accountability to the public at large will be a big step in the right direction. Moreover, the utility must do its best to serve all ratepayers; a fully-implemented Customer Assistance Program will see to that.

Con't on Page 5.

THE UPTOWN BRANCH - CON'T.

Newer comrade Vinay Temburnikar has simultaneously formed a YDSA chapter in our backyard at the University of Cincinnati while being a member of the Working Group. We look forward to working in conjunction with young socialists to build a worker-led, student-led, intersectional mass movement across generations to bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old. As you continue your organizing efforts, consider talking with your neighbors to expand this necessary structural advancement and form a Branch where you call home! As our numbers grow, solidarity is more important than ever. Building it through organizing on the streets where we live and work is one more pillar we can stand on to build our possible future.

SEWER JUSTICE - CON'T.

Additionally, this highlights the importance of the material needs of the working class as being essential to promote greater class consciousness. Everyone needs water and sewer services; the so-called "sewer socialists" of the 1900's knew the value of sanitation services, and in spite of our many advancements since then, the need to fight for these services hasn't changed. Finally, climate change means that rainstorms will become more heavy and frequent, exacerbating these issues. Thus, climate exacerbates existing public resource inequalities.

The Environmental Justice committee of DSA Cincy/NKY has joined this fight to protect people's right to water and sewer services by joining forces with CUFA when appropriate. Members of the committee have attended meetings, town halls, and joined in at the People's State of the Sewer press conference. In recognition of this work and of the virtue of CUFA's goals, the General Meeting in October passed a resolution of support for CUFA's Sewer Justice Platform. Join us in the fight!

These Months In Local Leftist Hist - Con't.

Many of these exiles were socialists and, appalled by the American system of slavery, they joined the local abolitionist movements in significant numbers. Among the most prominent was August Willich, former commanding officer of Frederick Engels during the Palatine uprising. During his time in Cincinnati he was editor of *Der Cincinnati Republikaner*, the propaganda arm of the local Social Workingmen's Club.

Following John Brown's execution the group put on a large memorial service in Over-The-Rhine. It was a diverse crowd, including local white and black Americans as well as German and French immigrants. A general theme of the event, during various speeches, was that John Brown's example showed the time for non-violence and political persuasion, long the most advocated tools in the abolitionist chest, was over. The black abolitionist and teacher Peter Humphries Clark declared that all present were "in the midst of a revolution that had to be fought to the death" while Willich promised that the institution of slavery and its supporters would be "crushed into a common grave." The following day *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* expressed its revulsion both at the event's mixing of races and its radical sentiments.

Willich would go on to found a German-American Union Army unit that fought in the battle of Shiloh while Clark would go on to be the first black socialist to ever run for office.

#cancelKavanaugh - Con't.

I was 17 and not 15 when I experienced that sort of laughter and I know exactly what she means. In the 20 years I've been open about my experiences, I've heard the same story from many other survivors: the laughter, the smug grin marks the moment where you can't tell yourself this is somehow a misunderstanding. You are being hurt by someone who takes joy in having the power to hurt like that. That laughter, scorn, dismissal of your humanity makes its indelible mark, a life sentence you won't be able to dismiss or fully heal. Con't. on Page 6.

#cancelKavanaugh - Con't.

I am here because our senators are voting tomorrow to grant a lifetime appointment to someone who laughs like that but cries and lies in response to the push to hold him at all accountable. I am here because our capitalist political system is built to give more power to people like him who use it unjustly and make it harder for the victims of their injustice to push back. Our senators are asked to disregard that indelible laugh and confirm someone who has already shown us how else he uses power: to override the rights of people with disabilities to make informed choices about their bodies and environments; to allow the government to imprison foreign citizens without charge in Guantanamo; to deny a 17-year-old immigrant in ICE custody an abortion as permitted under local law; to overturn compensation set by a jury actually holding a police officer accountable for killing a black man; to bar a 17-year-old entering prison from accessing special education while incarcerated or for catch-up after release.

*We have heard from Kavanaugh's classmates and from his own calendar and yearbook as well as from Ford's indelible testimony what *he* was like as a 17-year-old. He still got into Yale just like his grandfather before him after feeling secure enough in his privilege to joke publicly about drinking illegally and using women for sex and he didn't have to worry those jokes would have any consequences, which indeed they haven't yet. He hasn't figured out that it's wrong when the president who nominated him mocks a sexual assault survivor in a public forum. He hasn't had to acknowledge that no matter how much he cries about it, he has had it easy and he doesn't show sympathy for those who legitimately haven't. We don't point this out because we are humorless but because some things just aren't funny. And because this is not a laughing matter.*

Seven years ago this week, the Occupy movement highlighted the split between the 1% in control and the 99% of the rest of us living under economic inequality.

Con't. on Page 7.

#cancelKavanaugh - Con't.

I am a socialist feminist because I know the economic injustice of capitalism is deeply linked to the patriarchy, to all systems of oppression that divide us as workers and as neighbors. We are being attacked and mocked because of our races, religions, gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, disabilities, union memberships, even desire to use public schools and other public spaces and amenities. Our response to those attacks must be solidarity, meaning we come together as one and draw on our differences to support one another in strength, to stand with each other and for each other.

I am here because we are here together in that solidarity. We will have the last laugh, but it won't be THAT kind of laugh. There is real joy in liberation and we can get to it if and only if we work together. And I look forward to doing just that with you.

DSA Southern Caucus Conference - Con't.

...through a discord channel for the better part of this year. While Rust Belt chapters used the conference to make introductions and discuss personal experiences and compare local situations for the first time, chapters in the South have already had the opportunity to make these connections and will be looking more toward solidifying things. Members have already been able to coordinate on things such as hurricane disaster relief, YDSA formation, anti-fascist organizing (the Charlottesville chapter is part of the southern caucus), and more. Meeting in person in advance of the national convention, which is also likely to be held in the south, will allow southern DSA chapters to get on the same page about what needs to change in the broader organization to enhance and strengthen organizing in that region, one that contains many small rural chapters and faces an outsized amount of highly visible white supremacist organizing relative to the rest of the nation.

The Southern Caucus has already put together a successful gofundme campaign for the convention with final details on location still being nailed down. **Con't. on Page 7.**

DSA Southern Caucus Conference - Con't.

It is likely that DSA Cincy-NKY will send a small contingent and be able to function as a bridge of sorts between the South and the Rust Belt. Our Northern Kentucky branch will look to bring experience from teacher strike support and syringe exchange work to our southern comrades and it will be exciting to see how the needs and experiences of the South differ from that of the Rust Belt. Both are regions lacking the spotlight and large membership totals of the coasts, but together represent an extraordinarily large geographic chunk. A greater presence in national leadership for these areas that stretch from New York state to Florida to Saint Louis to Milwaukee should be a goal for next summer's national convention. Working together and remaining in communication will be critical to seeing that through.

Medicare For All Canvassing - Con't.

We've talked with hundreds of people, collected nearly 150 signatures, and found nearly a quarter of those who signed were interested in more information about DSA. We've sent monthly follow up emails to those who signed, tried to make contact with those interested in socialism.

Usually about ten of us go out. We go out in pairs, the less experienced with those who have the rap down and are ready to answer questions. Every time I've gone out with someone different. In between houses we've talked about our experiences, our beliefs, and how we got involved with DSA. Everyone has a different story: one person was one of the founders of the chapter struggling with her own healthcare challenges, another reads amazingly wide. On my first outing my partner taught me useful tips on how to make the people we talk with feel comfortable. Everyone I've gone out with has been enthusiastic and encouraging.

There is room for more canvassers. You don't need experience, and you don't need to be particularly outgoing. We all feel hesitant at first, even a little scared maybe. But for me, every time I come away glad I made the effort. My partners and I always have had good talks with people and an insightful time engaging a neighborhood together. You should join us next time.

October 2018 Brake Light Clinic - Con't.

Beyond changing brake lights, the goal of organizing for mass movement is what separates this action from other charity work. The extreme danger posed to the most vulnerable of our neighbors when interacting with the police serves as fertile ground for conversations about over-policing, and what it might look like to have a system oriented around the needs of the people instead of the interests of the ruling class. We can imagine a world without the perverse incentives that have resulted in the for-profit prison industry, and what's more, we can build it - we have a world to win, and nothing to lose but our chains!

*MARCC ID is a program organized by a coalition of local religious groups which allows people who would otherwise be unable to obtain official state documentation to secure an alternative ID card for the purposes of interactions with the police, to establish utilities such as water and electric, and to access other services.

Many thanks go to the editorial team for taking the time to put this edition together. And even more thanks go to the contributors that wrote pieces.

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See you again in January!

