

# Cincinnati & NKY Socialist Agitator

a publication of Democratic Socialists of Metro Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky

No. 2 - March 2018 | Workers of the World **UNITE!**

## Militancy in Frankfort

by Daniel & Molly

On March 12th, members of Democratic Socialists of Metro Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky traveled an hour and a half to Frankfort join public employees rallying in defense of public pensions. Over three thousand people, rallying against the administration's attacks on state employees, held signs & led chants against governor Matt Bevin & legislators supporting the bill, while workers time & again repeated the slogan of the protests, "A Pension is a Promise."

Multiple speakers rallied the crowd to keep up the fight against proposed pension cuts. While the usual calls to go to the ballot box were heard, more radical talk of a walkout kept surfacing, particularly from teachers from Eastern Kentucky. Speaker Mickey McCoy evoked this possibility, telling the crowd: "If we talk the talk, we gotta be ready to walk the walk."

The demonstration as a whole was nothing short of awe-inspiring. Emboldened workers stormed the Commonwealth's capitol building on a chilly weekday afternoon, proving themselves a force to be reckoned with as the Kentucky legislature debates the future of their livelihoods. DSA member Molly, who was in attendance at Frankfort, reported: "Standing in solidarity with these budding revolutionaries, I was overwhelmed by not only the comrades I had arrived with, but with the comradery being created among these once strangers hell bent upon securing a future for themselves and all those committed to work they so passionately do. Standing in solidarity with teachers fighting for their own security, we strengthen our own solidarity as a DSA chapter. When we stand with others, our own bonds are strengthened, making our power one that can be unstoppable."



Some of the 11 members of the chapter who made the hour and a half drive down to Frankfort to support KY teachers at a rally in early March.

## Solidarity with Kentucky Teachers!

an official statement of the Executive Committee

Democratic Socialists of Metro Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky stands in solidarity with all teachers & other public employees in Kentucky threatened by the pension cuts in Senate Bill 1. The struggle to maintain retirement pensions is an entirely defensive one, engaged in by workers who are already poorly paid & exhausted by the work & inadequate funding for education provided in the state of Kentucky. Our organization stands firmly against threats to remove what little is provided to already harshly exploited workers in the state of Kentucky. We pledge our material support to any action undertaken by the workers in response to this bill, including any walkouts, work stoppage, or strikes undertaken by Kentucky teachers.

Further, Democratic Socialists of Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky calls on our community to stand in solidarity with local teachers. Kentucky teachers are requesting everyone call 1 (800) 372-7181 to demand legislators vote against the pension cuts. Now is the time for everyone to support teachers to protect their benefits.

**Fight for Socialism!**

**Join DSA!**

**[dsausa.org/join](http://dsausa.org/join)**

# DSA Celebrates International Women's Day



Hayley addresses the crowd at Piatt Park on March 8th



The crowd braved frigid temperatures to celebrate Women's Rights

*transcript of speech given by Hayley at IWD 2018:*

Hi. I'm Hayley, I am a member of The Democratic Socialists of America. I would like to give a quick shout out to my girls in Petrograd who were tired of the war, tired of bad work conditions, tired of no rights, so they took to the streets, had a strike, leading to the Russian Revolution, 101 years ago today. That sign over there, I held at my first action. It says, "DSA stands for racial equality, worker's rights and women's rights." When I went to my first meeting, in this building, entering a room of 20 or so able bodied white men, I wouldn't have thought that this sign was representative of the organization. But it does. And I'm so glad I stuck around to see that. Today our chapter has over 150 members. Last month we created our Women's Branch, which is co-sponsoring this event today. This year has been amazing for our chapter of DSA. Since July, we have been working every day to save the North Building of the library that houses so many resources, such as the Makerspace, the Homework Help Center and the Children's Library, all of which help meet the needs of working class women in our community. In December, we learned that the North Building would not close thanks to DSA and members of the coalition. Now our mission is to democratize the library, to ensure that this institution continues to be available and accessible to all members of the working class. We need your help.

Another recent DSA victory is the Newport Needle Exchange which was won by my amazing comrades in our Northern Kentucky Branch. The NKY Health Department has said that without direct actions by members of DSA, the needle exchange would not exist. Last week we started our campaign in Covington for a needle exchange. We need your help. Change is possible, when you fight hard for it. It is time to be radically righteous and demand more than just reform. When I went to my first DSA meeting, we had a small group discussion on the needs in our immediate communities. I said the most important thing to me was the opioid epidemic. After having just seen my best friend overdose in front of me, I knew there was something I could do and that there was something DSA could do. I truly believe that because I wanted this needle exchange for my community so desperately, it now exists. One person can be the catalyst for justice, but it takes a community to see it through. It takes organization. It takes an army. And the greatest army of all is the working class. We need your help. Please join us. Our chapter is in great need of union organizers. It is a priority locally and nationally for us. There is such momentum behind unions and labor right now; we can't let that die. These moments come in waves, there will be more, we're gonna make it happen and we're gonna build solidarity. But we're gonna do it the Socialist way.

(cont'd p. 4)

## **Canvassing in Working-Class Newport**

by Brendan

Canvassing efforts in support of a needle exchange in Newport marked a new stage for our DSA chapter. This was the first time our chapter got out into neighborhoods, knocked on doors, and reached out to people where they live. Because of our efforts, the Newport commissioners approved the implementation of a mobile exchange unit. As we look to new projects on the horizon, the experiences gained in Newport will be invaluable.

Most canvassers received a warm welcome. Charlie said one woman launched into her own description of the importance of a needle exchange, anticipating all the talking points. This was not uncommon. Daniel said one of the few "problems" he encountered was that people were already knowledgeable and supportive of the exchange. Rose was canvassing with Mary S. when they talked to an older man who was sympathetic. He was soon promoting the idea to other passersby.

Not everything was positive. Daniel and Bryan G. encountered one person who slammed the door after hearing "Democratic Socialists" and could be heard yelling "Democrats my ass!" in an apparent case of mistaken identity. In other cases the response was more aggressive. A few canvassers encountered conservatives who used racist dogwhistles said addicts should be left to die. Hayley talked to a man who said all addicts should be thrown into a burning building and blamed the country's problems on Mexicans.

Several canvassers found talking less and listening more to be the most effective. The US healthcare system is failing and many people have their own stories about it. People were very receptive when our canvassers connected this shared experience to the need for the exchange. In fact, the same man who called for the fiery deaths of drug addicts ended up changing his mind and voicing support for our efforts. Hayley talked to recovering addicts at the Henry Hosea House soup kitchen who were initially skeptical. One young person said, "I wish you all had been out here six months ago. I'm in recovery now, but if you had been out here then, I probably wouldn't have contracted HIV." (cont'd p. 4)

## **Opinion: ReNewport: "Clever" Name; Same Old Petit Bourgeois Bullshit**

by Paul K.

At the end of February the Newport Board of Commissioners approved the establishment of a mobile needle exchange program to be run through St. Elizabeth's Hospital. While this is definitely a step in the right direction in counteracting the opioid epidemic, it is only an incremental step in place of better options available. That, however, is a longer conversation for another newsletter.

This is about ReNewport, the pie in the sky "urban renewal" advocacy group claiming to want a better tomorrow for their city but at the same time rejecting tangible solutions to address the opioid crisis.



ReNewport is a "development" initiative founded in 2015 and led mostly by representatives of business interests

While we were working to make a needle exchange happen, it was plain to see that ReNewport was not on board, and would provide zero assistance with what DSA and the NKY Health Department endorsed as the best course of action.

"Not on board" would actually be an understatement. ReNewport gave no official stance nor deigned to reply to our letter asking for support. Instead, several of their members staged an absurd and petulant walk-out from a town meeting DSA organized for the NKY Health Department to explain the crisis and paths going forward. One of the walk-out artists, Steve Mathisen, made his own personal claims on social media that the NKY Health Department was not only (cont'd p. 4) 3

cont'd. from p. 2 **International Women's Day** We're not going to pay for police protection, we're not going to ask for corporate sponsorship, and we're definitely not going to pay permits to assemble in a public space. Why stand up against the militant patriarchy and fascism and capitalism if we're just paying them off at the end of the day? Middle and upper class white women have always been "allies" to the working class, but for most people in this crowd, "ally" is a dirty word. Allies say they believe in equality, but solidarity seems to evade them. During suffrage, the wealthy socialites walked arm and arm with the working socialists, but when it came time for our rebellions and our demands, we were on our own. We were left in jail, we were left jobless, we were left without rights. Don't be an ally; they are temporary. They mobilize for protests, then drive back to the suburbs. They mobilize for speeches, then disappear for a year. Don't be temporary. Be permanent. Join us in this fight now.

### **Don't be an ally... Don't be temporary. Be permanent.**

I would like to dedicate the rest of this day to our comrade Heather Heyer who was murdered last year by fascism and capitalism. Can we say her name? Heather Heyer! We have so much work to do in her name. **Long live the proletariat! Long live the working class! Solidarity forever!**



The heavenly twins hold an inspiring sign

### cont'd. from p. 3 **Canvassing in Working-Class Newport**

People were broadly supportive, and about five showed up in solidarity at the February commissioners' caucus meeting. The chapter's effectiveness continues to grow by engaging the public, poor and working class people, in struggles that directly affect our community.

cont'd. from p. 3 **ReNewport** wrong, but had willfully misled the public about HIV and Hepatitis C outbreaks in the area. Which, come on, guy.

ReNewport advocates opposing a fixed location exchange claim this isn't just Newport's problem, it is all of Northern Kentucky's problem. This is just a slicker way of saying, "not in my backyard." Well buddy, it's already in your backyard. It's in everyone's yard. It isn't called an "epidemic" for nothing.

ReNewport's position would be laughable if it weren't so short sighted and harmful. Statistics show that a fixed location exchange leads to dramatically cleaner streets, less crime, and actually reduces drug use—all things that would directly benefit poor and working class residents of the city. Fixed exchanges also offer a wider range of health services. A mobile exchange parked at St. Elizabeth's won't have the same impact and reach.

Maybe ReNewport supporters think the opioid epidemic will simply disappear along with the people who suffer from it because a mobile exchange is easy to squirrel away. And who cares if it is less effective? Steve and the rest of ReNewport likely won't have to see it. Maybe this is also why they don't have affordable housing built into their plan for the future of the town.

Intentional or not, it seems as if ReNewport believes in some fever dream of economic boom times lifting the city up onto a gleaming hill, while giving lip service to solving real problems gripping swaths of people throughout the area. Talk is certainly easy. Maybe, from them, that's all we can expect.

