

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

[The October 2015 Issue of the Washington Socialist](#)

Friday, October 2nd, 2015



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

October encompasses more work for We Need Bernie, DSA's independent-expenditure work for Sen. Bernie Sanders's presidential primary campaign. Our other concerns as socialists continue in parallel and are reflected in the articles this month – social justice, inequality and the critical interplay of economic justice and race, from street level to the football stadium box seats to the marginalized and disenfranchised people of Puerto Rico.

On the calendar this month:

Date change due to weather: the **Socialist Book Discussion Group** now meets **Saturday, Oct. 10**, 3 p.m. at the Kogod Courtyard (at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery) 8th and F Streets, Washington, DC (map). Gallery Place/Chinatown is best Metrorail access. Split Session – Discussion of two books in this session 1. Concluding discussion of Steve Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Organized Wealth and Power*. 2. Introductory Discussion and/or Full Discussion of Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*.

Sunday, Oct 11 Metro DC DSA General Membership Meeting, 2 p.m. at Martin Luther King Jr. Main Library, 901 G. St. NW. Preceded by a steering committee meeting at 12:30. Gallery Place is also the best Metrorail access.

Oct. 15 Jobs with Justice annual “I’ll be There” event, roast of CLC leader Jos Williams on occasion of JwJ’s 15th anniversary. 6 p.m., All Souls Unitarian Church, 1500 Harvard St. NW. Info [here](#)

Oct. 22 – “We Need Bernie” forum and rally featuring Jim Hightower, see article below.

Thursday, Oct. 29 DATE CHANGE — **Socialist Salon**, 6:30 p.m. at Hunan Dynasty, 215 Penna. Ave. SE. “Saving the US Postal Service from the Privatizers,” A Presentation by

Debby Szeredy, Executive VP Of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU). Best access from Capitol South Metrorail station.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Jim Hightower, progressive humorist extraordinaire, headlines a forum and rally for DSA's "We Need Bernie" independent activity Oct. 22. Merrill Miller previews the event and Metro DC DSA's activity on behalf of the candidate. [Read complete article](#)

The knotty problem of democratic socialists' focus on economic inequality and the more complex view of injustice embraced by activists of color is examined by two writers. Kurt Stand has an overview of the current picture particularly as limned by black activists writing in this terrain. [Read complete article](#) Dan Adkins locates one of the pivotal points – history and how we conveniently forget it in the throes of present-day activism. [Read complete article](#)

An ongoing project to rectify the racist misnaming of the Washington professional football team is described by Bill Mosley, with an account of an upcoming event in the project. [Read complete article](#)

Puerto Rico, encumbered by debt that US law and congressional meddling has made nearly impossible to manage, has been called the "Greece of the United States." Metro DC DSA co-chair Jose Gutierrez, a native of Puerto Rico, interviews Jose La Luz, one of the island's labor leaders and a national DSA co-chair, about the facts surrounding that comparison. We reprise this from Jose's article in the current *Democratic Left*. [Read complete article](#)

Tariq Ali's book on the effect of the Reagan-Thatcher ideology on subsequent "Third Way" neoliberal regimes under Blair and Bill Clinton is reviewed by Dave Richardson. [Read complete article](#)

Dan Adkins takes a look at a quirky scifi show on television, *Humans*, and what it might say about human relationships to increasingly complex near-sentient "persons." [Read complete article](#).

In "Good Reads for Socialists," more on race and class, trade policy macro and micro, government deployment of false narratives, and more. [Read complete article](#)

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["Humans," a TV Series with Hints About our Tech Future](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2015**

By Daniel C. Adkins

"Humans" is a British-American sci-fi series that has run on the AMC and Channel 4. The first season of eight shows is over, but there will be a second season in 2016. The series *Humans* is unique in that it occurs in a future where industrialized countries in the near future have robot helpers called synths. These synths, which look like humans, interact by speech, do chores, and remind us to take our meds. The plot gets interesting when we learn that a genius computer scientist has made a "family" of synths that are self-aware or sentient. These conscious synths are being hunted by a police agency for reasons that are not clear. What makes the synths interesting are that they can think, feel, and grow mentally just like the rest of us. The idea that robots would have a personality based on their own social history adds a dimension to the story.

Learning by socialization was a part of *Star Trek: the Next Generation*'s Data character and is beginning to be part of the plot in several new Sci Fi films, including *Her*.

The previous model for robots was that they were mass-produced and identical. However, as our Internet use becomes transcribed into personal profiles of ourselves, and soon involves our dolls, the idea that computers can learn from experience is becoming common.

The plot also focuses on a human family that ends up owning a synth, which (who?) is self-aware. Much of the plot revolves round the human family and the sentient synth bonding with and learning from each other.

Although there is no direct democratic socialist content to this series at the moment, how computers will impact our work and life in the near future is probably on all our minds. Already there are films showing the incompatibility of using self-aware robots as enslaved persons. Many of us will live long enough to see at least some of this tech be realized.

Footnote on the future: In time for this Christmas, computer scientists and AI specialists working for Mattel may have produced a new doll, *Hello Barbie*. This is sad news for socialist feminists as Barbie has been shown to be bad for young girls' physical self-image. The doll cannot but help but replicate some social values and which ones will be telling. The new doll has a Wi-Fi connection and a computer to allow discussions with young girls. The Wi-Fi connection builds and saves a girl's profile, which is used as the doll's memory (corporate resource anyone). The new doll will have 8,000 lines of coded conversation and is reported to be a good listener and will remember who is in your family.

For more info see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humans_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humans_(TV_series)) and for fun read New York Times, Sept. 16, 2015, Barbie Wants to Get to Know Your Child <http://nyti.ms/1Mrxp11>

The future is closer than you think.

[Bernie Sanders, Black Lives Matter, and Seizing the Moment- An Overview and Orientation](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2015**

By Kurt Stand

“I did not say anything. I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them ... and had read them ... now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. ... Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the number of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.” Ernest Hemingway, **A Farewell to Arms** (1929, Shocken edition 1969 p. 185)

Considerations

As Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign continues to gather support, he comes under ever sharper scrutiny – not only by Republican and Democratic Party opponents, but by others who are themselves working to address the social inequities that abound in our society. Some such criticism is itself destructive; the tendency to view every insufficient step forward as a form of betrayal is a charge that every alternative candidate from Eugene Debs to Jesse Jackson has faced. Yet criticism and debate is a healthy and necessary part of the process of building a social justice movement that is rooted in the diverse and unequal experiences of our society. The idea that unity can be created solely by seeking to overcome economic inequality — as a goal shared by all working people — while putting all other concerns on the backburner is false; all such attempts have come to grief on the realities of how people understand the world they inhabit. As the history of organized labor has repeatedly shown, division is not caused by those who have challenged racism or sexism, those who have challenged discrimination in any form – rather division is caused by the reality of such discrimination and perpetuated by those who wish to close their eyes to truths others know to be true through experience.

The importance of incorporating that experience in the Sanders campaign was expressed in an article by Bill Fletcher Jr. “The suggestion that race can be resolved through an appeal to class and economic justice alone suggests that economic justice will equally resolve the racial differential,” Fletcher wrote.

“It is not simply a matter of ‘a rising tide raises all boats’. The reality is that all boats may rise, but who finds one’s self in which portion of each boat? Or, to use the metaphor of the Titanic, who is in steerage and who is closer to the main deck?”

“When movements like #BlackLivesMatter and many in the immigrant rights movement point to this matter of racial injustice, they are not suggesting attention for a ‘special interest.’ Rather, they are pointing out that there can actually be no economic justice in the absence of racial justice. There can be no unity without a commitment to the fight for equality and justice. These struggles are interlinked. The sort of ‘political revolution’ that the Sanders Campaign proclaims has been a long time coming. Yet it will never arrive if there is not a full recognition that the class struggle overlaps that of racial justice. The ruling elites, for several centuries, have appreciated that race is the trip wire of U.S. politics and social movements. When will progressives arrive at the same conclusion?”

What follows is a consideration of several ways of connecting the dots to which Fletcher alludes. Taken together as an overview they may inform an orientation toward the Sanders campaign in its specificity and toward the broader challenge of addressing universality and difference, of building a unity that is genuine because it is built upon an appreciation of the fuller dimension of how social injustices impact upon individuals in all aspects of life.

Courage

The late comedian George Carlin once did a whole riff on how we overvalue the word “courage.” Courage on behalf of what is the question that lies begging – courage when engaging in brutal and cruel behavior, in the midst of brutal and cruel warfare, does nothing to change the underlying reality of pain and suffering inflicted upon those who are victims. This glorification of “courage” without reference to content is upheld too when someone is praised for speaking his or her (but almost always it is a “he” being praised) mind without softening words or bowing to “political correctness.” Ignored is the veracity of what is being said, for only the tone is praised – and ignored too is whether the words are used hurt others, hinder understanding, promote hate. The use of abstract words to distort the meaning they are presumed to have speaks to Hemingway’s critique of language.

Nonetheless courage – and indeed integrity, freedom, democracy, equality – can be made meaningful words, but only so long as they are linked to broader purposes, so long as they become concrete. It is this definition of courage that Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (a once-brilliant basketball player, an always-thoughtful and principled human being) applied in a recent *Washington Post* op-ed that helps shed light on the relationship of Bernie Sanders to Black Lives Matter and, beyond that, says a great deal about political choices that need to be made over and again. To quote:

“Ernest Hemingway once said that courage was ‘grace under pressure.’ Two presidential candidates, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, have recently tested this proposition. And how each man responded revealed the type of person he is and the type of president he would make: Trump authored his own doom, and Sanders opened immense new possibilities as a compassionate person and serious candidate for president.”

The negative example Abdul-Jabbar uses is Trump's crude and bullying response to Megyn Kelly's questions about his publicly contemptuous attitudes toward women. As Kareem notes, Trump's response was not only an attack on women, but also an attack on the First Amendment – for free speech and freedom of the press themselves become empty terms when someone in position of power uses their voice to attack and silence others. It was an approach Trump also took toward Univision, when refusing to answer questions about his attacks on Mexican immigrants – and his veiled threat to the First Amendment goes in tandem with his direct attack on the 14th Amendment which gives citizenship rights to immigrants but also significantly gave citizenship rights to black Americans, rights denied notwithstanding generations of having lived in this country.

And that brings us to the contrast with Sanders, for the article goes on to say,

“... Bernie Sanders faced his own challenge at a political event ... when two African American women pushed in front of him to use the microphone to demand four and a half minutes of silence to honor the death of Michael Brown. Sanders left the stage and mingled with the crowd. Later, Trump criticized Sanders as being ‘weak’ for allowing them to speak, but truly he showed grace under pressure by acknowledging their frustration and anger. Instead of bullying their voices into silence or ridiculing them as losers, pigs or bimbos, Sanders left. After all, it was not his event; he was a guest. Besides, his voice was not silenced, but came back booming even louder: The next day, Sanders posted a sweeping policy of reform to fight racial inequality.”

Context

The emergence of Black Lives Matter and the ever-widening support for Sanders anti-austerity message and call for a “political revolution” stem from the same source – the deepening patterns of inequality and insecurity that remain even in the midst of current economic growth and job growth. The stagnation in the US economy has lasted more than a generation now, and has been accompanied by an atrophying of our political system in which corporate power is expressed ever more openly and directly. The sense that there is no way out, that the system has failed, is the basis of the appeal not only of Trump, but more generally of Republican politicians and ideologists who use the sense of grievance, the sense of loss and decline, to point fingers and lay blame. Key to that is the separation of societal problems faced by most from the problems of inequality faced by many within the overall sense of our country's decline; a separation which makes it easy to shift responsibility for the current state of affairs from corporate power to those who were excluded during the putative “good times” of a past long gone – be that working women, be that Latino (or Asian or Muslim) immigrants, be that African Americans unwilling to live second-class lives. Because a system with separate and unequal categories of rights can't be justified in so direct a fashion, it manifests itself in cultural issues, in attacks on abortion or gay marriage, in promoting fear of black crime or Arab terrorism or Latino drug dealers, in rhetoric about anchor babies and “illegals,” and in both rationalizations of violence against women and the use of racialized tropes to project fear of people of color assaulting “our” women – and thus to justify police and vigilante-style attacks upon those deemed “other.”

Such a line of thought can be projected in “objective” social forms of charter schools, gentrification, bank lending practices that lead to disparities in wealth, health, education, employment or in the demagogic blaming-the-victim forms taken today by Trump, Cruz, Walker and their ilk. But what is relevant here is that an attempt to overcome injustices by a change in economic policy alone is insufficient to redirect people’s anger or hopes. For the appeal of conservatives lies in the pretense that a measure of economic security and opportunity will be possible if the egalitarian impulse of those who have less is rejected. And hence the need for advocates of universal measures ranging from health care to all to living wage initiatives to also address the issues of inequality – and issues of war, civil liberties, the environment, the whole panoply of concerns that are in fact if not always in immediate appearance, class issues inherent in the conflict between labor and capital. The increase of violence and fear of violence in everyday life is coextensive with the increase in insecurity, the point Angela Davis made in a talk given in February when the focus of popular anger was centered on Ferguson:

“... ‘Why the mobilizations now?’ Davis asked. Some would assume it’s because so many black men and boys have been killed within a short amount of time; however, she reminded us that the issue of black men being targets of police violence is [not a new occurrence](#), and it is important to correct the notion that it is. ‘There has been an unbroken line of racist police killings since the era of slavery,’ Davis declared. Davis directly attributes [police militarization to the war on terror](#), also saying that the war on terror has redefined what it means to be an immigrant and legitimized anti-Muslim prejudice and violence. ... [therefore] when addressing racism, other inequalities cannot be ignored. Racial and sexual violence are two modes of violence that have, historically, been particularly overlooked as well as allowed and accepted. ‘The pandemic of intimate violence is not disconnected from state violence,’ Davis said. She then called upon us all to ‘speak out against economic exploitation, against war, against the destruction of the environment, against anti-Muslimism and anti-Semitism, against gender bias and homophobia, for access to good organic non-GMO food, for free health care and free education for all.’ ”

Connections

The linkage of issue to issue is not the same as a laundry list that includes one item after another, united only by being written on the same piece of paper. Rather such inclusion speaks to how the lives of each and all are complex and themselves interconnected. And it only serves those who wish to maintain existing relationships of power and subordination to pretend otherwise. The legal challenges to labor law which, if successful, could largely undo the protections (weak and under assault as they be) are certainly distinct from various proposal designed to both make the lot of immigrants currently in the US more precarious, to lock many of them into a permanent system of lesser rights, and to make entry into the country more dangerous and more desperate. And indeed they are and do require distinct responses. So too are the issues of poverty and hunger distinct from the issue of choice and reproductive health for women. Yet so too they are as one for they are connected in the bodies and lives of those who experience them as a totality.

Dolores Huerta, a founder and Vice President emeritus of the United Farm Workers (and an honorary chair of Democratic Socialists of America), certainly has lived these together and the work she has done as an organizer and activist has been all these arenas – the struggle for an end

to poverty and for union representation, the demand for women's rights and the rights of immigrants. A unity in difference is evident in her defense of Planned Parenthood:

“People who oppose women's access to health care have spent years attacking Planned Parenthood with too many smears and distortions to count. But the one that truly makes my blood boil is the claim that because so many women who turn to Planned Parenthood are people of color ... Planned Parenthood must be racist! A spokesperson for the right-wing Libre Initiative just made this attack, accusing Planned Parenthood of ‘target[ing] minority communities’ and of working to diminish the ‘political power’ of women of color. ... When we say that Planned Parenthood does extensive work in communities of color, that's because women in those communities are deciding for themselves that they need the help Planned Parenthood offers. When a woman — especially a low-income woman — needs or desires access to contraception, a cancer screening, and yes, even an abortion, she can go to Planned Parenthood. Having that access means she has the ability to control her own health and her own future. That is not targeting or diminishing women. Instead, it's allowing them to have the dignity of making their own medical decisions, a right that so many people in the United States take for granted but that Latinas are too often denied. ...

“To put it simply: Attacking Planned Parenthood for providing Latinas with reproductive health services is another way of saying that Latinas shouldn't have access to reproductive health services at all. If some people want to attack Planned Parenthood, that's their right. But they should be honest about what they're attacking. They're attacking our access to health care, birth control and abortion.”

In her remarks we see the same logic that asked the Sanders campaign to address issues of racism and police violence – not as a distraction from his demand for universal economic justice for all, but to strengthen that demand. It was a logic that he and his campaign understood and are increasingly coming to embrace.

Closing the Circle

Returning to a contrasting comparison along the lines made by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Cornel West [amongst his many other distinctions, West is also an honorary chair of DSA] stated in an interview that:

“Brother Bernie and Brother Trump share one thing in common: They speak to the anti-establishment impulse among those who are looking for some candidates who are for real, as opposed to the superficial, donor-driven politicians that usually are dominant in any election cycle. [Trump] says, *I have been a donor, I have been a participant in this corrupt system for 30 years*. But all of a sudden now he's going to make America great again? No. Plutocratic corruption of government is unpatriotic. I don't know how you're going to be so much in love with America but you're participating in plutocratic corruption of the system and then you wake up now 30 years later and say, ‘Lo and behold, I'm going to be the savior of overcoming the corruption.’ No, that lacks integrity. He has authenticity, but he doesn't have integrity. Bernie Sanders has authenticity, but he's also got integrity. Integrity, of course, doesn't mean that you

agree with everything that a politician does. But it's just so rare that you get authenticity and integrity."

"Authenticity," like "courage" can be reduced to rhetoric without substance, yet rhetoric which finds a chord amongst people with a desire for public speech that is direct and unadulterated, unlike the poll-driven language devoid of belief offered up by most Republican (and Democratic) candidates for higher office. But addressing popular discontent and promising change, without challenging the corporate power at the center of our economic and political system can only find one outlet – scapegoating people; a "populist" racism is the only place authenticity such as Trump's can go.

On the other hand, the integrity of Sanders is connected to a critique of the structural economic and political injustices rooted in capitalist society, injustices which give political meaning to the projection of a socialist alternative, injustices which can only be addressed by opposing all forms of such injustice rather than appealing to some in order to further step on others. West sees Sanders' integrity in those terms, terms which allow him to make a deeper and fuller critique of contemporary US capitalism than does Sanders. West has been doing that, most recently when campaigning with and for Bernie in South Carolina. In the same interview as quoted above, he explains how he sees those interconnections:

"... how do we come up with a language that allows a coalescing to take place, so that we don't end up with narrow talk about diversity and inclusion within a neoliberal framework? That is basically what the Democratic Party is all about. It's about diversity and inclusion within a neoliberal framework. That's got to be radically called into question. You can call it into question in the name of fighting against white supremacy. Wonderful. You can call it into question in the name of fighting against economic injustice and class inequality. That's wonderful.

"But when it comes to movements, we've got to interweave the struggle against white supremacy with the struggle against economic injustice, with the struggle against homophobia, with the struggle against patriarchy, and any form of xenophobia. Anti-Jewish hatred, anti-Palestinian hatred, anti-Arab hatred, anti-Muslim hatred. How do we talk about all of those simultaneously?

"Twenty-five years ago, people talked about it in terms of fighting for radical democracy. Once you have the empowerment of everyday people across the board, then you're able to wed what people traditionally call 'identity politics' with what people call 'class-centered politics' because the two are so inseparable that you can't talk about one without the other. I think there's something to be said for that position."

It is a position we can now fight for and through the Sanders campaign. Rather than ask people who feel left out to silence their voices, we can construct a path that makes the inseparability between "identity politics," and "class-centered politics" central to all socialist politics.

Conclusion

Most of those who are active in building Sanders' campaign, just as most of those active in the streets protesting police violence, are young. A contrast to the voices in the articles above – although themselves of differing generations, it is true that Huerta, Davis, Abdul-Jabbar, West and Fletcher all were decisively influenced by the transformations and struggles of the '60s and '70s, whether in the heart of them or just coming of age in that era. And this influences the perspective they bring to bear on the issues of the intersectionality of race, gender, nationality and class, on the relationship between movement and electoral politics – even given the significant differences between them (as can be gleaned in the varying emphasis in the perspectives noted above). The period – roughly coinciding from the Montgomery Bus Boycott through to Nixon's resignation – saw a tremendous upsurge of activism which sought to expand the gains of the New Deal to the country as a whole, an expansion which brought to the surface hidden/suppressed tensions and manifested itself in an enormous number of political, cultural and social movements which transformed our society, yet fell short of needed social transformation. Instead we had the reaction of Reagan, of neo-liberalism, of the Democratic Leadership Council, of a sharpened conflict between so-called identity politics and a narrow supposed class politics that saw each other as the problem. As reaction continued, such tensions became muted in a shared attempt to maintain some radical vision, some measure of progressive politics.

Today we are in a renewed moment where popular movements are again on the offensive, demanding what could be rather than simply resisting another loss. In such circumstances it is not surprising that there are disagreements over how to move forward, how to be inclusive without privileging one voice over the other. To date, certainly, it seems that much has been learned from the past; we are not seeing a replay of the dynamic that undermined transformatory politics two generations ago. Still, the danger remains. And, yet and so too does the possibility of concretizing hope in a way that can rebuild our democracy, establish social justice, and give greater relevance to a socialist project as diverse as our society, as united as our collective needs. It is a perspective which can be furthered through the Sanders campaign so long as we root the political in the everyday experience of life in a society with multiple forms of hierarchy and division. The possibility of such taking place may be gleaned in a resolution adopted this summer by National Nurses United entitled "Black Lives Matter and the Health Impact of Societal Racial Disparities":

"While there are clear correlations between structural racism in the criminal justice system and economic and social justice, each area is also a clear and present danger to life and health, as well as an infringement on the human rights of those affected and on American democracy. As nurses, we are dedicated to preventing all forms of illness, protecting health, and alleviating human suffering. ... [therefore the] NNU supports efforts at comprehensive solutions including, but not limited to:

- **Comprehensive criminal justice reforms**, including national standards for greater public oversight, accountability, and prosecution for rights violations ...
- **Systemic prison and sentencing reform** to reduce mass incarcerations and disparities, and improved prison and jail health services.
- **Genuine, universal guaranteed healthcare** based on a single standard of quality care for everyone ...

- **An end to austerity economic policies** that disproportionately affect minority populations.”

That resolution was consistent with the one the NNU adopted shortly thereafter on the presidential campaign: “Caring, compassion, and community. These are the values at the heart of registered nursing. This is true at the bedside, as nurses advocate for patients and families—and also beyond the walls of the hospital, as RNs call for [environmental](#), [racial](#), and [economic](#) justice in the name of public health. National Nurses United, which represents some 190,000 nurses nationwide, seeks to uphold that positive vision for the health of this country by endorsing Senator Bernie Sanders for president.”

Grace under pressure unites all such movements in multiple ways as this overview seeks to show – courage of convictions rests in the grace given through respect to one and all.

Sources:

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[Clinton, the Successor to Reagan](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2015**

A review of *The Extreme Centre: A Warning* By Tariq Ali (Verso, 2015)

By Dave Richardson

I have always wondered why it was so important for Bill Clinton to push NAFTA, which undermined working conditions for the bottom 80 percent in both the U.S. and Mexico, through Congress. This especially galls me inasmuch as, while George H. W. Bush was in favor of it, the Democrats blocked it until Clinton came in. I've also wondered why Clinton did away with traditional welfare, replacing it with the temporary TANF program, which threw so many families, very largely his supporters, into extreme poverty. The 2000 repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, which eliminated financial regulations which might have prevented the 2008 financial collapse, also occurred on Clinton's watch.

Tariq Ali presents the case that the political dominance of the extreme centre bears the responsibility. *The Extreme Centre* itself is a long op-ed, which offers an explanation in the parallel history of the U.S. and the U.K., with the Democrats continuing and fulfilling the programs of Ronald Reagan and the British Labor Party doing the same with respect to the programs of Margaret Thatcher. In both cases, “[t]hey refuse to step down and talk to the people whose worlds they have destroyed.” (p. 4) Even the names they gave themselves, Clinton's Third Way and Tony Blair's New Labor, evoke similar images, that of turning away from the needs and concerns of their supporters.

The term “extreme centre” refers to the hard right turn after 1989 by the more conservative parties followed by a similar turn by the more progressive parties as they followed suit. As Ali puts it, “[w]hen the Berlin Wall went down in 1989, it took European Social Democracy with it.”

(p. 2) Further, “[c]apitalism, intoxicated by its victory and unchallenged from any quarter, no longer felt the need to protect its left flank by conceding any more reforms. ... social democracy became redundant.” (pp. 2-3) Not only that, but earlier reforms had to be rolled back in the name of reform or progress or some other nice-sounding term.

Ali is a master of words, and once we come across the term “extreme centre,” we have an aha! experience and understand just what has happened. Similarly, he refers to most of the quasi-independent states scattered across the globe as “U.S. protectorates,” with the U.K. as a “U.S. vassal,” once again terms that clarify a lot of recent world history. Referring to countries as protectorates seems to me superior to just invoking “the Empire,” for its specificity and obvious connection to reality. “The Empire,” on the other hand, incorrectly connotes some kind of similarity to the very different British or Roman empires.

In Britain Blair’s New Labor kept the trade unions at arms’ length, and after two years in office “the gap between executive salaries and the average wage was the largest in Europe.” (p. 22) “Between 1990 and 1996 a million people lost their homes through repossession, while 390,000” formerly publicly owned homes were repossessed. (p. 22) At the very beginning of its term, New Labor cut single mothers’ welfare by 11 pounds per week and established tuition for the previously-free public universities, policies that the Conservatives hadn’t been willing to even propose. (p. 26) These ‘reforms’ didn’t make much of an impression on the budget, but they sent a message: New Labor had chosen which side it was on.

Despite its brilliance, at 192 pp. the book itself is probably 172 pp. too long for the American reader. Born in what is now Pakistan, Ali has lived in Britain since he matriculated at Oxford University in the early 1960s, and is naturally much more concerned with the U.K., and Europe in general, than the U.S. Thus, in a sense, this review misrepresents the book by its overwhelming American emphasis. While we all know about the enormous fortune acquired by the Clintons after Bill left office, Ali spends 12 pages documenting the largesse received by members of the cabinet of Blair and his successor Gordon Brown after they were replaced by the Tories.

The Extreme Centre is dedicated to Hugo Chavez, and a great deal of Ali’s hope for the future rests on the independence movement in Latin America, where Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia have thrown off the U.S. protectorate, established themselves as independent countries, and encouraged other countries in the region to follow. Nevertheless, independence movements have been crushed in Haiti, Honduras, and Paraguay, while Brazil seems to have lost its way and is imposing austerity, and Argentina is struggling in U.S. courts with debt problems.

Another challenge comes from the BRICS group, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The heart of this group is China, which by some measures has surpassed the U.S. in terms of the size of its economy. The main threat from China is that its economy may soon be so large that it will be able to afford military expenditures that the U.S. cannot match, and hence the rate of economic growth is the key number to watch. In his discussion, however, Ali loses his way by diverting attention to a great many side issues and thus downplaying the main story.

Ali really does have a way with words, as you may have noticed from the quotes above, and *The Extreme Centre* is an enjoyable read. However, his case fits together a little bit too well, and I am concerned that the background data is being massaged a bit more than I am comfortable with. Nevertheless, his brilliance cannot be denied, and no serious student of politics can afford to be ignorant of his views.

Appendix I: THE CLINTON RECORD, more completely

Not only did Clinton abandon “any pretense of a New Deal,” (p. 20) but NAFTA really hurt, and “[i]n 1998, the [real] wages of the bottom 80% were lower than they had been in 1989, and significantly lower than in 1979.” (p. 24) The U.S. is the only capitalist country where workers have actually had to increase their hours to maintain their living standards, if not just to survive. The march of inequality continued apace, as the ratio of CEO incomes to those of ordinary workers, which had increased from 42:1 in 1980 to 85:1 in 1990, quadrupled to 326:1 in 1997. (p. 24) “The ruling elites ... which so vigorously and shamelessly promoted their political system to win over the peoples of Eastern Europe, are now quietly disencumbering themselves of that very system.” (p. 10)

In fairness, we should note that Clinton has pushed through some reasonably progressive legislation, e.g., his 1993 tax cut for the middle & lower classes, which simultaneously raised them for the top 1.2 percent. He also reversed the Reagan/Bush restrictions on abortions, expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit, and saw the passage of the Brady Bill, with a 5-day waiting period for handgun purchases. Overseas, yielding to pressure he returned Aristide to office in Haiti, withdrew US support for UNITA in Angola, and supported the overthrow of Mobutu in Zaire/Congo. However, the effect of these progressive victories pales in comparison with the major harm imposed by NAFTA, the elimination of welfare, the undermining of financial regulation, and his budget surpluses, which led directly to the 2001 recession.

More mixed is Clinton’s don’t ask, don’t tell policy for the military, which seemed progressive at the time but not later. And he famously tried and failed to establish a health care system for all. On the anti-progressive side, he pushed through DOMA, which defined marriage as between one man and one woman, bombed Serbia, maintained the murderous Iraq sanctions regime, and left Somalia a failed state. For his troubles he was rewarded by earnings of over \$160 million in the period 2001 to 2011, and much more since.

Appendix II: THE OBAMA RECORD

Lest we think that Obama has been any better, we should consider that his term in office has been one of unending recession, largely as a result of his 2009 \$787 billion economic stimulus package, which was known at the time to be too small. Nevertheless, he found \$3,000 billion to bail out financial and real estate enterprises, with hardly a crumb for underwater homeowners. At the same time, Obama is trying to double down on NAFTA with the Trans-Pacific Partnership and a similar Atlantic trade deal. And he shares with Clinton the distinction of being the ones who have destroyed the Democratic Party by eliminating its hold on Congress and state governments.

Obama also has some real progressive achievements, especially in terms of Obamacare, which expanded Medicaid in addition to making health insurance affordable for millions. He also saw through the Lilly Ledbetter Act, which relaxed the statute of limitations on equal pay lawsuits, expanded SCHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and put through Dodd -Frank, which pretended to restore regulation to the financial sector and actually did set up the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. And he may yet make millions eligible for overtime pay. Overseas he established diplomatic relations with Cuba and negotiated the Iran nuclear treaty.

More mixed are Obama's efforts to end Iraq and Afghan Wars and the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010, which continued the Bush tax cuts but achieved some progressive goals.

On the anti-progressive side, he walked away from his campaign pledge to pass card-check union recognition. He proposed budget sequestration, which has undermined the ability of the federal government to fulfill its mission, and has undermined public education by pushing charter schools. Obama disregarded elections in Egypt, Haiti, Honduras, Paraguay, Ukraine and Venezuela. The effect of this was a failed attempt to end Venezuelan independence, but a successful move to establish a U.S. protectorate in Ukraine. Disregarding elections in the other four prevented them from establishing themselves as independent states free of U.S. protection. In the pursuit of new protectorates, Obama created failed states in Libya, Syria, and now Yemen.

[Culture, Politics, and Black Lives Matter](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2015**

By Daniel C. Adkins

American culture has some advantages and some blind spots. One tendency of some younger Americans is to believe that the world was created when they were born and anything before that is just history and therefore not important. The advantage to this belief is that some parents are not automatically able to share their prejudices with their children and aspects of racism are diminished. However, the disadvantage is that one misses understanding the flow of history. We remain ignorant of our people's and the world's diverse histories.

This weakness becomes clearer, for example, when President George W. Bush gets us into an Iraq war without understanding the centuries-old conflict between Sunni and Shiite Islam. He believed any Shiite backing the invasion was for democracy and the U.S. Some Shiites had their

own agenda: Shiite domination (or, in Iraq, Payback). In the Iraq War our leaders were blinded by ideology and a lack of cultural and political understanding.

So if you do not know your history you will be less prepared to effect change and less prepared to recognize the allies that you will need. One disadvantage of ignoring history, to take a very current example, is that you fail to take into account America's original sins: slavery and native genocide. Slavery was an economic mode that kept blacks' wages down to zero for the profit of the slave-masters and a social racism that cemented their political power. It was amazing that Jefferson wrote that "all men are created equal" in the age of absolute monarchy. But the sad reality is that this slave-owner's personal life never matched his ideals. Jefferson was able to abolish the slave trade (1807) but it took the Civil War to end slavery. The postwar Reconstruction period involved white Southerners reestablishing their control by discriminatory laws, marginal educational opportunities for African-Americans, and terror. The terror ranged from Ku Klux Klan raids and lynching to enforced servitude and Jim Crow segregation, which functioned to economically depress African-American wages and education.

Despite the perceptions of the broader public, for many African Americans today it is not clear that the terror of Jim Crow has ended, with police shootings and mysterious hanging "suicides." Ferguson, Mo., known best for a singular police shooting of an unarmed young black man, has also exemplified law enforcement that uses fines as a "police department profit center," with arrests leading to unaffordable bail that keeps African-Americans destabilized in the community and workplace. Only 16 percent of those arrested can make bail, often for nonviolent offenses that don't seem to require bail.

The militarization of local police (in Ferguson and throughout the nation) creates an "us or them" logic that erases citizen-government ties. These practices have revised the police motto of "Protect and Serve" to "Exploit and Sabotage" in some towns.

Amazingly, the example of Ferguson and the policy of police militarization misses the lesson learned in the Iraq surge. The surge's main goal was protecting the population from each other and Al Qaida, not killing insurgents. The surge in Iraq succeeded in defeating Al Qaida by moving troops into Iraqi neighborhoods to protect them and learn from them. The militarization of police in the US does the opposite and makes it more difficult to talk to citizens and to know neighborhoods.

Ferguson shows history repeating itself with a local white-led government using tactics that extract revenues from African-Americans, keep them poor, and sabotage a sense of community. If you do know your history you are not surprised at man's urge to profit from others in unequal power relationships, and then you are better prepared to do something about it. Still, you have to wonder if the past has even passed. Certainly the Black Lives Matter movement that began in Ferguson is trying to make sure the echoes of history are not overlooked.

When it comes to remedies, many white progressives identify with Senator Bernie Sanders' policies, see them as a remedy for many kinds of inequalities, and support him. The last recession, and illuminating responses such as Occupy Wall Street, made clearer how the

billionaire class was running the country and us into the ground. The logic of capitalism and its “free market” enablers in Wall Street and the government have allowed the nation’s profits to fall into the hands of the super rich. This has led to no new raises for the middle class and cuts in support and opportunity for the poor. Today’s middle class has more financial instability with two wage-earners today than with one in the 1950s. New college grads are often faced with loan debts (profits for banks and the government) that sabotage their family life. The poor and many minorities face an even steeper road and less support out of poverty. Success today is enabled with early childhood educational enrichments that are often out of reach of the poor who face marginal schools. Capitalism afflicts both middle class and poor, but the effects are different.

Bernie Sanders’s campaign gives the 99 percent a chance to push back against inequality overall. But his economic programs and proposals do not specifically focus on minorities, and Ferguson has shown us that some policies targeting the poor need to change.

Black Lives Matter is an organic and vigorous response to deadly police tactics. BLM and Bernie got off to a rough start, when activists interrupted one of his speeches and were booed by some of the audience. But despite the bad start a dialog was begun. Some Bernie supporters were slow to see the necessity of allying with BLM. With all the talk of diversity, we are still caught up in our own communities, cultures, and histories. This is a major weakness of all Americans, including progressives.

So progressives have focused on the economic aspects of inequality, envisioning social change in parallel. The minimum \$15 per hour wage may free workers from multiple jobs and an 80-hour work week. This would give them a chance for a civic, political, and family life. More extensive education could allow black workers better jobs and a more stability. Health care as a right can minimize the main cause of bankruptcy. The failure of Ferguson was not just the police, but a system that undercut African-Americans from being the leaders in a community in which they are the majority. BLM is developing policies to support its objectives and Bernie will not be far behind.

Combating the billionaire class and its off-shoots will require the alliance of all the colors of the rainbow. It will also require us to be more knowledgeable and respectful of all of our cultures as well as learning to work with allies. We need the empathy that come from understanding our allies and their histories. This empathy can not be based just on just books, but an understanding of how history has crippled lives and opportunities for the many while gaining riches for the few.

ADDENDUM: WHEN LIVES ARE SO DIFFERENT, HOW FAR CAN EMPATHY REACH?

Working as allies with Black Lives Matter (BLM) raises the question of whether white progressives can really empathize with African-Americans threatened by militarized and biased police. Below are two personal histories that question white capabilities in this matter.

Colonel Robert Gould Shaw was an abolitionist who commanded the Massachusetts 54th Regiment in the Civil War. He had joined the union army, fought in several battles, and had been wounded. He was given command and trained the newly formed Mass. 54th Regiment, one of the very first African-American regiments, which was sent to the South Carolina Sea

Islands. On an advance into Confederate territory to destroy cotton and other supplies, Col. Shaw talked politely to the wife of a plantation owner. His troops were not amused. Afterward several of his African-American troops showed him the instruments of “discipline” and torture that were used to keep slaves in line. He got educated. In a battle after that episode Col. Shaw and many of his men died in an attack on the Confederate Fort Wagner. That attack ended the questioning of Black troops’ valor and greatly expanded the use of African-American soldiers. You cannot ask more of someone than to give his or her life for the abolition of slavery, but intellectually understanding the horrors of a system cannot be compared to living in the system.

When I saw the film the film *Glory* portraying the fight of the 54th, I cried. I could say that I cried for the men of the 54th fighting for liberty, and I did, but it was because I had lost someone who fought for liberty. In my life there has always been a hole where my biological father might have been. My father died leading a Marine platoon in attack on Iwo Jima (World War Two). In the attack, half of his men were either killed or wounded. When hit, he refused medical aid by the corpsman and ordered him to take care of the platoon’s Marines first. He was shot again and died. My father took responsibility for confronting totalitarianism and for the care of his Marines. My belief in democratic socialism is an extrapolation of my father’s action against fascism and his care for those around him. If you can die for your platoon and country, why not live for humanity and our home the Earth?

Sadly, people in the African-American community die by gunfire too. When they die by police action, poor police training, or racism on the part of those who should be helping and protecting them, it is a betrayal of our whole society. Although I have lost a loved one to gunfire, I do not claim to know the feelings of losing a loved one for no good reason.

BLM is transforming these needless deaths into action to stop this madness and the evolution of Jim Crow keeping Black people down in new ways. BLM urgency can be seen as an effort to make the racist deaths have meaning. Already two police chiefs have been retired for racist behavior and more many police departments are rethinking their policies. BLM has given Bernie Sanders the priceless gift of realizing his need to get into sync with the African American community. Bernie has no chance of winning the presidency unless he gets strong support from the African American and Latino communities. BLM helped by giving him a wake-up call.

In this article I have used the word “white” with great reluctance because I find it humiliating that the word is still used to identify Euro-Americans the way the slaveholders defined it. It is too often used to polarize people, not to help our needed social unity.

[GOOD READS FOR SOCIALISTS – OCTOBER 2015](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2015**

More and more our good reads are coming from [Portside](#), an aggregator of left-interest articles. The site posts 4-5 articles a day. Interested readers can subscribe to “Portside Snapshot” providing the day’s lineup in one email; there are also specific cultural- and labor-themed subscriptions.

Bob Kuttner, writing in *Common Dreams*, on the trade debacle <http://portside.org/2015-09-22/americas-collapsing-trade-initiatives>

And the trade deals’ effects on our region? Steve Shaff in the *Baltimore Sun* says it would be bad for the kinds of business that thrive and (sometimes even) create new jobs in the DMV...
<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-tpp-20150602-story.html>

Bill Fletcher Jr. in *In These Times* leads a discussion with Black Lives Matter activists about misperceptions of the movement and what paths are available.
<http://inthesetimes.com/article/18394/from-hashtag-to-strategy-the-growing-pains-of-black-lives-matter>

And in an article in DSA’s *Democratic Left*, Fletcher elaborates on the engagement of socialist economic concerns with wider issues of race. This article is also referenced in Kurt Stand’s article in this issue.
http://www.dsausa.org/why_we_cannot_speak_of_economic_injustice_alone_or_why_race_matters

[Added Oct. 2 2015] Lawrence Ware and Paul Buhle argue in *Counterpunch* that C.L.R. James, author of *The Black Jacobins*, always linked economic class issues to racism in the root causes of black inequality. <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/02/insurrectional-black-power-clr-james-on-race-and-class/>

Telling the story is an imperative for any communicator, but power relations and differentials have a huge effect on public discourse: Robert Parry on the “Power of False Narrative”
<http://portside.org/2015-09-29/power-false-narrative>

Jose Gutierrez’ interview with Jose La Luz in this issue points to strong citizen resistance in Puerto Rico against the commonwealth’s unjust treatment by the US government. This article from *New Politics* indicates that the resistance is becoming more organized.
<http://portside.org/2015-09-28/puerto-rico%E2%80%99s-new-party-working-people-fights-austerity>

[Is Puerto Rico the "Greece of the United States" - An Interview with Puerto Rican Labor Activist Jose La Luz](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015



Jose La Luz

The Washington Socialist <> October 2015

By José Gutiérrez

*[This article [also appears in](#) the Fall issue of **Democratic Left**, the national publication of Democratic Socialists of America]*

In late June, the governor of Puerto Rico, Alejandro Garcia Padilla, announced that Puerto Rico would not incur any more indebtedness and would not be able to meet its current debt obligations. The crisis has been compared to that of Greece, but the analogy is not correct. For background and ideas about how activists can become involved, I spoke with José La Luz, a DSA vice chair and veteran trade unionist, worker educator, and human rights activist. The interview has been condensed and edited for clarity. As Democratic Left went to press, the situation remained fluid.

Gutiérrez: The current situation of Puerto Rico has been compared to that of Greece by some people, by others it has been compared to Detroit. What can you tell us about how you perceive the current economic crisis in Puerto Rico?

La Luz: Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz has said that Puerto Rico is the Greece of the Caribbean. The only problem with that is that PR is not a sovereign country. PR is in fact

the Greece of the United States, and that is what I want to get across to progressives in the United States. Puerto Rico being its largest territory, the United States bears some responsibility for this debt that has grown to more than 70 billion dollars. It is one of the highest per-capita debts in the world, even higher per capita than Greece.

Gutiérrez: Could you say something about how it got this way? The United States has a big debt, what does Puerto Rico's debt relate to?

La Luz: The increase in the debt of Puerto Rico is a result of the decline of the Puerto Rican economy. The manufacturing sector of Puerto Rico, which to this day is around 46% of the island's gross domestic product, has been adversely affected by U.S. trade policy and by the decision by Congress to phase out tax incentives that applied to Puerto Rico until December 2005. Like New York City in the 1970s and Detroit today, a decline in the manufacturing sector has led to lower revenues, a loss of jobs, and residents leaving the island. This decline in the economy has increased the need for social spending at the same time that revenues are decreasing. The increased debt has led to a decline in the credit rating of Puerto Rico, which before the crisis was positive. This has limited the ability of Puerto Rico to borrow money to counteract the decline in the private sector. It's a vicious cycle that had started just before the recession.

Two more factors have adversely affected the Puerto Rican economy. Under the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, Puerto Rico has to ship goods using the U.S. merchant marine, which increases the cost of importing and exporting goods to the island. This law applies to Puerto Rico but not to other U.S. territories, such as the U.S. Virgin Islands. This bill affects the cost of living in Puerto Rico and should be phased out. Second, the cost of energy is high because most the island's electricity comes from petroleum. The island passed Law 82 in 2010 mandating increased use of renewable energy but it can't spend or borrow enough money to implement the mandate.

This debt has a direct impact on social spending. Programs that help the neediest are severely cut. It results in massive cuts in public services. The administration of Governor Luis Fortuño laid off more than 15,000 workers. In terms of the politics of austerity, it compares to Detroit in the sense that Detroit went bankrupt. The fiscal and budget crises there had a devastating impact on poor and working families. Yes, there are comparisons, but the fundamental difference is that Greece is a sovereign country and as such has some tools that it can use, including restructuring of the debt, which is not an option that Puerto Rico has by virtue of being a territory of the United States. Neither does it have the tools that Detroit has to declare bankruptcy.

There is a broad coalition of nongovernmental organizations and unions and even the business community that hopes to persuade the federal government that Puerto Rico should have the ability to renegotiate its debt with the Wall Street banks and the hedge funds. Former Governor Anibal Acevedo Vila; Professor José Nicolás Medina, a well-known constitutional attorney; and labor leader Roberto Pagán, one of the top leaders of one of the SEIU affiliate in the island, argue that the federal government has a legal and constitutional obligation to resolve this crisis. The Obama administration has said that it will not intervene. Progressives in the United States must be involved in figuring out what can be done to find a solution to this crisis.

A group led by the Service Employees International Union in New York City and other parts of the mainland in the Puerto Rican communities is rallying some support to pressure the Obama administration. My view is that the administration doesn't have the political will and certainly not the political capital to engage in this fight. This has to become an issue for the presidential election. It's far more important at this point than thinking about solutions to the whole question of the relationship of the island to the United States, which as you know, is a perennial debate in Puerto Rico.

Gutiérrez: In the long term, though, isn't some resolution of the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico part of the answer to the problems of Puerto Rico? Puerto Rico, with a population of 3.5 million people, has the same federal representation as the District of Columbia, which is to say, none. Puerto Rico, as you mentioned is not a sovereign country, it's subject to federal law, which limits what it can do.

La Luz: No question about it. It would be irresponsible if I didn't say that. It is something that has taken and will take a long time to resolve one way or the other.

Meanwhile, Puerto Ricans no longer migrate to the northeast and Chicago as in the past. The explosive growth of the Puerto Rican vote in central Florida could be the decisive vote in terms of who becomes the next president of the United States. That was certainly the case in 2012 where the percentage of Puerto Ricans in Florida who voted for Obama was 73%. Arguably it was one of the main factors that led to Obama winning Florida in 2012. If that happens again and that vote supports a Democratic nominee, it could decide the election. But that vote shouldn't be given for free. It should be part of a commitment to find solutions to the fiscal and economic crisis in the island.

Gutiérrez: I understand that the Fortuño administration, the previous administration, had suspended several collective agreements but then at the end of his term many of those agreements were restored.

La Luz: I was intimately involved. I was dispatched to organize the campaign to restore collective bargaining. In effect, what happened is that Law #7, signed in March of 2009, abolished collective bargaining. So we had to get a law enacted to restore bargaining rights and allow us to renegotiate the contracts that had been frozen. Once again, a coalition effort led by unions and allies in the religious community and community organizations fought to restore bargaining rights, and that's why the contracts were renegotiated. But most likely what's going to happen now will be massive layoffs and freezing the contracts because the government has no capacity to pay, and that will be disastrous.

Gutiérrez: Would you say that the Garcia Padilla administration has been better on labor rights than the Fortuño administration?

La Luz: They all have to operate within the confines of the government's ability to pay. The Garcia Padilla administration, despite the fiscal and economic constraints, has abided by the terms of the collective agreements. Even though it hasn't paid the full wage increases that have

been negotiated, it has tried for the most part to do so. It has complied with contractual obligations. That may not be an option now, if the finances of the government collapse totally.

This crisis is so imminent that all progressive forces in the United States and in Puerto Rico have to work together to address this emergency. The Obama administration needs to take action now and it has to become an issue on which candidates for the nomination of the Democratic Party take a position.

(Sign a petition to end the debt of #puertorico <https://t.co/MkuGYz0qfh>)

José Gutiérrez is a member of DSA's national political committee, and an executive board member of Metro DC DSA. Like José La Luz, he is from Puerto Rico. The DSA National Political Committee's statement on the crisis in Puerto Rico is [on the DSA website](#).

[Jim Hightower Has Friends in Low Places that Aren't Wall Street](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

***The Washington Socialist* <> October 2015**

By M. Miller

A forum and rally featuring the acerbic and hilarious populist Jim Hightower on Oct. 22 stands out among many Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America activities planned on behalf of the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign in October. This event, among many others, is part of the larger Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) [We Need Bernie](#) campaign.

Unlike any other candidate for president, Sanders is refusing to take corporate money to fund his campaign. He's standing behind his values to support working Americans instead of selling out to Wall Street billionaires. As the DSA We Need Bernie campaign website states, "Senator Sanders will challenge the dominant discourse of neoliberal Democrats that privilege corporate business interests over those of all working people." As a result, "his candidacy could help expand both the progressive movement and the democratic socialist voice within that movement." Sanders might not be a flawless candidate, and though he has stated that he sympathizes with Democratic Socialism, he doesn't always perfectly align with socialism. But he is a strong voice for socialist value of placing people over profits and his grassroots campaign is a sharp departure from the "business as usual" attitude of neoliberal politicians. For these reasons, DSA is supporting his campaign for the Democratic nomination, and the Metro DC chapter is doing its part to raise awareness about Bernie Sanders and his advocacy on behalf of working Americans.

Activities by DC DSA as part of the auxiliary campaign for Bernie Sanders include passing out petitions and flyers and having conversations with people at local farmers markets in the greater DC area. (Feel free to join us on Saturday, Oct. 3 at the U Street Farmers Market on 14th and U, located [here](#), from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.) We'll also be canvassing neighborhoods in the DC metro area throughout the month of October, starting on Columbus Day weekend.

But the event we're most excited about is a rally featuring Jim Hightower to bring together progressive organizations in DC for Bernie Sanders's campaign. The event will be held on Oct. 22 from 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m. at Busboys and Poets on 5th and K St., near the Gallery Place/Convention Center and Mt Vernon Square Metro stops. Among other speakers, *Nickel and Dimed* author Barbara Ehrenreich stands out. Local politician and Busboys and Poets owner Andy Shallal will speak, along with labor leader Larry Cohen. The keynote for the event will be the entertaining and always on-point progressive agitator Jim Hightower. A man of diverse talents and a former Texas agriculture commissioner, Hightower is a radio commentator, author of seven books and syndicated columnist, as well as a rousing speaker who knows how to galvanize the 99 percent to beat out the 1 percent. He's well-known for his newsletter, [The Hightower Lowdown](#), and his biting wit and clever humor. But under his hilarity lies the serious urgency of taking this country back from the hedge fund managers and Wall Street billionaires for the ordinary, working American families who make up this nation. In his commitment to the grassroots, Hightower is a powerful force to be reckoned with in American culture and a persuasive advocate for Bernie Sanders's campaign.

We hope to see you at the rally and at many of our other events and activities in support of DSA's auxiliary campaign for Bernie Sanders. Be sure to spread the word among allied friends and organizations. To keep up-to-date with this event and more, I encourage you to visit dsadc.org, join Metro DC DSA's Facebook group (www.facebook.com/groups/DCDSA/) and join us on MeetUp (www.meetup.com/DC-DSA/).

Miller is co-organizer of the We Need Bernie campaign.

[What's in a Name- Forum to Explore Whether Name of Washington Professional Football Team Should be Changed](#)

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

The Washington Socialist <> October 2015

By Bill Mosley

A forum on Tuesday, October 27 will explore whether the Washington professional football team's name, which is regarded as racist and offensive by many Native Americans, should be changed.

The forum will take place at Temple Shalom, 8401 Grubb Road in Chevy Chase, Md., beginning at 7 p.m.

The speakers will be Tara Zhaabowekwe Houska, a tribal rights attorney, and Mike Wise, a former sports columnist for the *Washington Post* and now with ESPN. Houska and Wise will look at the controversy surrounding the team's name and the stereotypes it perpetuates. They also will discuss the issue in the context of recent advances in civil rights, including the seminal Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage and the removal of the Confederate flag from public spaces around the country. Audience members will participate in a question-and-answer session after the presentation.

Houska is a founding board member of [Not Your Mascots](#), an organization dedicated to the eradication of harmful native mascots. Wise, who advocated changing the team's name while at the *Post*, also works with The Undeclared, a web site under development that will explore the intersection of sports, race and culture.

The forum is being organized by [Rebrand Washington Football](#), a local grassroots organization working to change the Washington football team's name. Contact RebrandWF@gmail.com for more information.