

THE CHOO CHOO SOCIALIST REVIEW

The latest news and updates from Chattanooga DSA



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Why We're Here

by Katie Keel, Chattanooga DSA Co-Chair

From Article II of the DSA national constitution:

"We are socialists because we reject an economic order based on private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power, discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability status, age, religion, and national origin, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo.

"We are socialists because we share a vision of a humane social order based on popular control of resources and production, economic planning, equitable distribution, feminism, racial equality and non-oppressive relationships.

"We are socialists because we are developing a concrete strategy for achieving that vision, for building a majority movement that will make democratic socialism a reality in America."

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Where Your Dues Went

by Jaime Booth, Chattanooga DSA Treasurer

1. We paid for an ASL interpreter at each of our meetings, keeping in line with our commitment to accessibility for all. Sara (our interpreter) is now a member, too!
2. We kept up the website (chattanoogadsa.org). If you haven't been in a while, stop by — and send it to your friends!
3. We continued subscribing to Zoom so all meetings hosted throughout the organization can be safe and accessible.



What is Socialist Night School?

by Peter Sooley

Check it out, socialism is taking off. It used to be such a no-no word, but now people are interested and we're all looking around to figure out why this is so appealing? And that's what socialist night school is about. We're hashing out ideas from high-level concepts like how the capitalist system creates exploitation to practical how-to guides on building a union in your workplace. These are not easy things to talk about. But if we're going to own the means of production, we need to start talking about what that means.

Night school is a safe space to air our ideas and explore things together. There are a lot of bold, unfamiliar ideas in this new left and it's not like everyone's gonna have all the right answers. That's the 'D' part in 'DSA.' The organization itself was founded on the idea of pluralism and that no one is going to hold your nose to the party line.

There is a long legacy of internal fragmentation and disagreement on the left and it's almost a tradition at this point to argue about stuff. Chattanooga night school thankfully doesn't degrade into shouting matches. We want to have a discussion and learn new things from each other. There are so many diverse backgrounds behind each one of us, but socialism brings us together again and again. We believe in a just future. Now we're just working out the details of how to get there.

The night school format is very common in a lot of the chapters around the country. I think this is because it's a good way of bringing in some academic rigor to help fortify the things we already know and feel in our gut without, you know, hitting someone on the head with a little red book. It's also just a healthy dose of idealism to go along with the realities of organizing a daringly left organization in Chattanooga. How does change happen? Where has it been done before? We can't help but want to talk ourselves into action.

While a lot of us in DSA are good friends, socialist night school is open to the public. We really encourage new faces and love to see them. It's actually the perfect way to dip your toes into DSA to see the kinds of stuff socialists care about. It may surprise you.



Fighting for Trans Liberation

by Sarah Mack

Happy Pride Month! Pride started as a riot in 1969 led by trans, black woman Martha P. Johnson. She stated, "There can be no pride for some of us without liberation for all of us." As much as all queer people would love for pride to be solely a celebration of our lives, we cannot celebrate while laws are being made to harm our community. In 2021 alone, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee has signed at least five anti-trans bills. This "slate of hate," as titled by the Human Rights Campaign, must be stopped.

The trans community in Chattanooga has come together to start the Chattanooga Trans Liberation Collective to fight these hateful bills. The bills specifically target trans youth in schools and sports and trans people of all ages in using a gendered bathroom. The first action of the collective will be to host a rally on July 18 from 2-4 at Coolidge Park. The event will include local trans speakers, music, and readings of queer children's books. Please come out to support and fight for trans Tennesseans!

In addition to the rally, the collective will also be partnering with other TN DSA chapters for a letter writing campaign and other future events. If you or anyone you know would like to help out with these actions, please email Sarah McIntyre at sarahbeana@gmail.com.

For more info on the "slate of hate" go to bit.ly/TNantitransbill

To Submit A Letter To The Editor

- Keep them topical, short (200 words or less), legible and not more often than one every 30 days. Letters may be edited for clarity and length
- Must be signed with name, address and telephone number.
- Send to: Editorial page editor (either Times or Free Press), 400 East 11th St., Chattanooga, TN 37403; fax: 423-757-6383; or e-mail: letters@timesfreepress.com

Canvassing for Monty

by Geoffrey Meldahl

After a chapter-wide vote to endorse Monty Bruell's campaign for Mayor, canvassers from Chattanooga DSA connected with workers all over the city about the issues and stakes in the election. Voters responded positively to Monty's program, and in-person conversations proved to be a useful countermeasure to the well-financed propaganda machines of the other leading campaigns. It seems apparent that, especially in a less crowded field, a candidate with a strong volunteer base and a clearly articulated working-class platform could really shake up city politics. Let's keep the pressure on!



"Why We're Here" continued from page 1



We believe that such a strategy must acknowledge the class structure of American society and that this class structure means that there is a basic conflict of interest between those sectors with enormous economic power and the vast majority of the population.

In the Chattanooga chapter, we are determined to bring these principles to bear on the conditions that affect the working people and families of our area. We have a proud history of labor activism here — Chattanooga was once a stronghold of the Communist Party in the south, and as a chapter we maintain close ties with the labor organizations in the area.

We intend to carry that legacy forward into Chattanooga's future to correct the glaring inequities that the existence of an upper class creates. We have three of the south's most elite private schools in town, yet the Hamilton County public school district ranks 66th out of 140 Tennessee school districts, Marion County ranks 113th, and Sequatchie County ranks 118th. About 20% of Chattanooga households have a yearly income less than \$20,000, while we are also home to two of the wealthiest zip codes in Tennessee, on Lookout and Signal Mountains, with median annual incomes up to 13x that.

As workers, we supply crucial goods and infrastructure to our region and the world — from cars at Volkswagen to consumer goods through the Amazon warehouse to food through our poultry processing plants — yet a minimum wage worker would need to work 85 hours a week to reasonably afford a two-bedroom rental house here.

And to top it all off, the racial component of these inequalities is impossible to ignore. Just as one example, the typical white household in Chattanooga earns twice as much as the typical Black household, and our racial income gap is 30% worse than the country as a whole, despite Black Chattanoogans representing 32% of our population.

That these realities can coexist is unacceptable to us. These realities all stem from the same economic root, the poisoned foundation that pervades most of the world and American society in particular — capitalism, which poses no limits on the hoarding of wealth, which allows a tiny few to live with thousands of times more wealth than they will ever need, while thousands of people in our town go hungry and sleep on the street every night.

Despite the modern, progressive, tech-friendly image the city has been projecting for the past 20 years, Chattanooga is no better than the rest of the country with regard to the plight of working people, and is in many ways worse than even that sad average. The legacy of slavery, of treating workers — people — as property to be used and abused at will, persists here. The racial animosity that the capital class seizes upon and encourages in the white working class is still here, with several Chattanooga neighborhoods remaining more than 90% Black in racial composition.

Capitalism is a vehicle for human greed to fly far past all reasonably conceivable limits, and for the negative consequences of that greed to reverberate throughout our society, even to the point of literally destroying our livable human habitat, this planet. We are socialists because we do not believe a just, fair, and truly free society can exist while capitalism is its economic framework. And eventually, capitalism will result in no society at all.

The people we want and need to reach with this idea are the working people of Chattanooga, who are the most critical targets for our socialist message, via our own labor-specific efforts as a chapter, our political campaign work, and our work with local labor organizations. We also proudly partner with other organizations in the area who advance the interests of workers in specific areas. Our revolution begins with the worker, and there is no substitute for a mass movement of people who are joined in solidarity, in the understanding that workers, and only workers, standing together against greed and all the other methods of social division that enable greed, can create the society we want to live in.

Our mission is to ensure that every single person in Chattanooga, and eventually the rest of the south, the United States and the world, has the ability to freely share in the vastly abundant fruits of modern labor, the fruits that, currently, only a tiny few can eat at will. We won't rest until this has been achieved. **We hope to see you around soon. There's a lot of work to do, but we're all in this together.**

Solidarity,
Katie Keel, co-chair

Attend an Upcoming Event

- General meeting: To be announced
- CALEB Coalition Meetings: Second Thursday each month
- Socialist Night School: July 8 ("Why the Working Class")
- Socialist Book Club: July 11 (*Hammer & Hoe*)
- Trans Liberation Rally: July 18, 2 p.m. Coolidge Park
- National DSA Convention: Aug. 1-8



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this newsletter online,
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