

Volume 002
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GREEN PARTY
DIRTY BALLOT TRICKS
IN ILLINOIS



TACTICS
THE LEFT AND THE
FAR RIGHT



BLACK LIVES MATTER
STRENGTHEN OUR
MOVEMENT

THE RED VINE



Journal of the Red Party

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Green Suppression in Illinois: A Party Mismanaged

by **Josh Hollandsworth**

'Democratic socialism' is the goal, except when it isn't. Decision-making by the people is key, except when leadership thinks it's unrealistic. All candidates should be given a position, except when it may take votes from us. The party should be successful, but not too much so. In its 15 years of existence the Green Party of the United States truly has been a mixed bag. It is largely because of this that they face potentially their best electoral year yet- as the largest independent party that can be called 'left wing' in American political metrics, the Green Party potentially has a lot to gain; in particular, from Bernie Sanders supporters who may defect from the Democratic Party out of disgust with presumptive nominee Hillary Clinton. Bernie's social democratic views are not far removed from what the Green Party has generally held in its umbrella ideology.

Indeed even leftwing critics of Sanders could find reason to like Jill Stein, who lacks the long history of voting for war crimes that Bernie has. Never one to miss an opportunity, the Greens have now voted to issue a declaration in support of 'democratic

socialism', a motion that passed the nominating process by a great majority and which will be voted on at the National Convention of their party.¹ It is expected to easily pass. With potential for greater success, opportunism is even more visible within the Green Party and their attitudes have become increasingly hostile towards anything left of social democracy. Their halfhearted measure to repaint themselves as 'democratic socialist' to match Bernie's style is just one act that supports this notion, but there are bigger problems afoot.

I am writing this article specifically in response to the Green Party's involvement in suppression of other third parties, with the most recent case being in the state of Illinois. Rob Sherman, a Green candidate for the Illinois 5th Congressional District, filed a challenge to the ballot access of Mimi Soltysik of the Socialist Party USA as well as Frank Fluckiger and Chad Koppie of the Constitution Party. Under Illinois ballot access laws 50,000 signatures are required for an independent or third party presidential candidate to appear on the ballot, but petitions for ballot access with fewer signatures (even only one) are accepted so long as a formal challenge to the candidacy is not

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filed. This challenge can be submitted by any citizen in the state of Illinois. That Sherman, a third party candidate himself, filed these challenges indicates that he is looking for a cheap way of eliminating competition smaller than he. Dirty tricks such as these have been used for years and still are being used against Greens by the Democratic Party, and yet Sherman feels no shame at his anti-democratic act. Notably, this is the second time he's done this - he did the same thing in 2012 against Stewart Alexander, the Socialist Party's candidate that year. He was a candidate on the ballot at that time as well.

I became aware of this situation on July 5, when Mimi made a brief post about the matter on his personal Facebook

page. His only comment at that moment: "'Disgusted' isn't a strong enough word."² I went over to the Illinois Green Party's Facebook page where they had made a post celebrating their successful ballot access and asked for a comment on the matter; I was the first person on there to mention the situation. Within an hour, a public statement was posted on the ILGP website regarding it.³

The statement defended the legality of his action, saying that it was the sole act of an individual and protected by Illinois law. This was followed by a low-key jab at the other parties, hiding in its wording an implication that their inability to meet 50,000 signatures was because they "did not make a comparable effort". Still, the

'ever-generous' state branch admitted that: "...it is not the role of our party to police the ballot when all minority parties face a fundamentally unfair electoral system that is heavily stacked against them, all to the benefit of the two corporate parties."

The party closed their statement saying that they disagreed with high requirements for ballot access and commended the Socialist Party as "...the party of Eugene V. Debs, an historic agent of social progress in America..." and "...a potential ally of the Green Party in the struggle for further social progress." Huh, interesting way to treat a potential ally!

Nothing in the statement indicated that any action was going to be taken against

Sherman. No revocation or threat of revocation of membership, and no statewide dissociation from his candidacy. I pressed the matter further, and responses varied. There were one or two apparent Greens who were angered at this state of affairs and said it was out of character for their party. There were those who suggested simply waiting because surely the party would do something more material! There were those who said that they disagree with Sherman's act, but it technically didn't violate the Ten Principles so he couldn't be removed (I'd say it violates the principle of "Grassroots Democracy" as is posted on their site but hey, what do I know?). There were those who chortled at the SPUSA's inability to collect as many signatures as they and who suggested it was completely justified on this basis. Then there was the ILGP itself, whose comments on the thread gave the appearance of neutrality but which happened to "like" one or two of the more deprecating comments made by other Greens. They did mention that:

*"He is not endorsed by the ILGP or any chapters. Furthermore, he is not recognized by the Green Party of Chicago or the DuPage County Green Party."*⁴

Oh, okay... Case closed guys, let's go home! Wait, he's still on their website. And in another comment they've

confirmed that he is still a member. So what gives? Says the Party: *"he is listed as a Green Party candidate because he was recognized by the Chicago Greens even though he is not recognized by the DuPage greens and the GP of Chicago."*

I think the next commenter summed up my reaction rather well:

"So the Green Party doesn't claim him....but you won't disown him either???"

Seeing that my efforts with the ILGP were fruitless, I decided the next bubble to burst was William Kreml's. The recently announced Vice Presidential partner for Jill Stein managed to eke out a single state (his own state of South Carolina) in the Green Party's presidential primaries, being the only candidate to beat Stein in a state primary. Judging by how Illinois played out, one would almost expect Stein to "challenge" his candidacy and remove him from the whole process! But instead she took him up by her side and now he stands as potentially the second biggest voice in the party. He, too, was celebrating the Green Party's ballot access victory in Illinois when I jumped in with this:

"Not on the ballot is the SPUSA candidate, who members of your Illinois state branch acted to remove. What is the GP

leadership doing about this? It doesn't exactly send good messages for an independent party claiming to be 'democratic socialist' to attack another which has supported socialism from its inception."

This was ignored, though it did get a somewhat humorous response from another Green who insisted they weren't actually trying to be democratic socialists. The next day I pressed the matter again, specifically asking if he had a comment on the situation as it had developed. This time I got a response. His words:

*"I am going to confess that I do not know what the ILGP will decide to do about Rob, if anything. I do not want to represent I know something that I don't. I can only say that the good folks I know in the ILGP have had it with Rob. Whether that leads to any disciplinary action regarding someone who did win the primary for his CD [Congressional district] I cannot say."*⁵

Okay, let me give him some benefit of the doubt; Illinois isn't exactly his department. But if he knows about it then the whole national leadership has to as well! Sadly this is where my little adventure comes to an end. In a private message, the ILGP stated that they have "no additional

comments on this matter,” and I've not heard of any action by the national branch to intervene in this state of affairs. What does this say about the nature of the Green Party?

Marxists know that social democracy is a dead-end street - it cannot address the contradictions of capitalism, only move its oppression and theft from workers into a nicer package. Though there are indeed some people with real socialist sentiments in the Green Party, the material actions (and inactions) of the leadership indicate a general disinterest in serious commitment to creating a workers' republic. This is a critical element for any organization that calls itself revolutionary.

Indeed the issues I have observed with the handling of

this situation could amount to a microcosm of the Party's issues - there was reluctance to commit to supposed ideological principles, empty lip service to socialist ideals, lack of organization between branches, tacit support for suppression of independents, and yet still an insistence on maintaining support for the Party's position (whatever it was supposed to be.) I voted Green in 2012; they were the third party I first turned to when I abandoned neoliberalism. This election cycle there are many, many more people who are in the position I was. Let us continue along the path I followed then, constantly critiquing and questioning capitalism, looking to what can (and must) replace it, and investigating who truly fights it and who just borrows revolutionary language to describe stale European

liberalism. Jill Stein said of the Democratic Party "...you can't have a revolution in a counter-revolutionary party,” as members of her group use the bourgeois state's system to suppress others in the same manner as her more significant opponents have done. Who, then, are the real counter-revolutionaries?

Notes

1. http://www.gp.org/green_party_moves_towards_declaring_itself_eco_socialist
2. <https://www.facebook.com/mimi.soltysik/posts/1353317051363370>
3. http://www.ilgp.org/ballot_challenges2016
4. <https://www.facebook.com/ILGreenParty/posts/1237253392961241>
5. <https://www.facebook.com/william.kreml/posts/10207096363348273?pnref=story>

Party Update:

by Gabriel Pierre

The first convention has put the RP in a stronger position both politically and organizationally to campaign for building the Communist Party of the future. If you were one of

the 640 readers of the *Red Vine* or our website since the May issue, consider joining the Red Party - or writing us a letter, submitting an article, or making a donation to help us keep running.

Black Lives Matter: Organize for Justice!

Statement by the Red Party Central Committee



The Red Party condemns the killing of Philando Castile in Minnesota and Alton Sterling in Louisiana, yet more victims of the terror campaign perpetrated by the armed wing of the state. The slogan ‘Black lives matter’ should be as obvious and self-evident as the color of the sky... but as we’ve seen time and again, this isn’t the case.

In stark view for all working and oppressed people to see, Philando Castile - a Black father, education worker and trade unionist - was shot multiple times by a police officer despite having complied with the officer’s instructions. Alton Sterling’s death in Baton Rouge,

Louisiana was also captured in a gruesome bystander video depicting two officers tackling him to the ground outside a gas station before shooting him while restrained. In both cases, the men were armed but lawfully licensed to carry.

It is increasingly implausible for the political establishment to deny racism’s profound structural presence in American society — even professional conservative blowhard Newt Gingrich noted that whites “instinctively underestimate the level of discrimination” faced by Black people.¹ But where the more fair-minded sections of the ruling

class and its ideologues see racism primarily as a problem of individual prejudices or, at best, a social problem to be remedied by feel-good reforms and a hefty dose of privilege-checking, communists recognize racism as built into the very structure of American capitalism. Black oppression, dating back to the slave labor that built up the Thirteen Colonies and the modern police’s origins as slave-catching patrols, manifests most sharply as deaths at the state’s hands - which was worse in 2015 than during even the most violent year of Jim Crow segregation.² But it also comes in the form of poverty, unemployment, inferior

access to health care and the prison-industrial complex.

Almost immediately, mass protests formed in the St. Paul area, Baton Rouge and around the country. The capitalist media is leading a contemptible offensive against the movement after a ‘lone wolf’ sniper killed five police officers during a solidarity demonstration in Dallas. They are criminally drawing an equal sign between an individual’s act of violence and the wholesale lawful slaughter our movement fights against.

To be clear, while communists are not pacifists, we oppose acts of individual killings like this one because they *harm the cause of liberation*. Individual terror not only leads to increased state repression in its wake, but also tends to demobilize the masses and make them into passive observers rather than agents of history. The existing situation continues, with reactionary forces in a better position and the movement weakened. For example, the Oath Keepers - a right-wing paramilitary organization following in a long tradition of extra-state terror levied as discipline against restive people of color - have called on “all

patriotic Americans” to take up arms against the “campaign of Marxist terrorism,” which is “closely related [to the] Jihadist terrorism offensive.”³

In the past two years #BlackLivesMatter has had a real impact in politicizing thousands of poor and working-class people, in building alliances⁴ with labor, women’s and anti-imperialist struggles, and in forcefully reintroducing the politics of liberation into the public consciousness in a way not seen since the Black Power movement decades ago. But the movement is at a crossroads.

Semi-spontaneous street protests are positive but limited in their effectiveness, and it’s not possible to keep tens of thousands mobilized on the streets indefinitely. Instead, what’s needed is conscious, collective organization around a program of radical change. Without this the movement can’t defend itself against external threats, nor speak with its own voice *contra* the Democratic Party and its carrot-and-stick agenda of direct repression mixed with periodic mutterings for toothless, tepid reforms.

Racism is and always has been a class issue; the

working class has a vested material interest in fighting oppression in all its forms. The bosses’ divide-and-rule is among their most effective weapons against us, and the “armed bodies of men” who terrorize the Black community are the same as those who break a picket line or conduct deportations. We need to get our own house in order, and fight for rebuilding the workers’ movement as a champion of social liberation. Our vision must become one of far-reaching democracy both within our movement and in the state, including democratic community self-defense organizations, demilitarizing the police, and ultimately the abolition of the police as an institution.

Notes

1. <http://time.com/4398908/newt-gingrich-whites-dont-understand-being-black-in-america/>
2. <http://qz.com/726245/more-black-people-were-killed-by-us-police-in-2015-than-were-lynched-in-the-worst-year-of-jim-crow/>
3. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/oath-keepers-calls-establishment-militias-response-dallas-ambush>
4. <http://red-party.com/black-lives-the-fight-for-15/>

Convention Report: First Convention of the Red Party

The Red Party held its first all-party convention via teleconference on June 17th through 19th. Though aggregates have been held in the past, notably in 2014 when the RP made changes to our Draft Program, this was a more general purpose gathering to not only improve our foundational documents but also elect leading bodies and hash out, through discussion and debate, our overall policy and how it relates to the central task of reorganizing the radical left into a party on a Marxist program.

Proceedings began with an opening address delivered by Gabriel Pierre in capacity as incumbent First Secretary, and a discussion putting our work into context. The Red Party is a small organization, one component of a movement that is itself divided into small, mutually competing sects. We have no illusion that we are *the* revolutionary party or party-in-embryo, rising to a mass base through slow linear growth... nor do we subscribe to the mistaken belief that a Marxist party can be improvised overnight, coalescing around a sect nucleus (perhaps a tendency in a “broad left” party) during the revolutionary crisis. No, history shows that if the working class is to become the ruling class, the Communist Party must be a substantial minority force *before* the revolutionary crisis arises. While the Red Party works to build up its own forces, we do so with a bigger goal in mind than simply becoming a relatively bigger sect *a la* Socialist Alternative or the International Socialist Organization. We aim for nothing less than a “revolution on the revolutionary left” - in other words, principled unity in a Marxist party.

Another discussion was held around reports on our general organizational status, our financial situation and reports and feedback from local work. It was noted that our membership, while numerically small compared to many other groups on the far left, is on a steady increase and has a healthy balance in

age distribution and sexual orientation / gender identity. Less so in other areas: only 17% of members are trade union members (reflecting our class at large in union density,) or example. Only 17% of our members are people of color and fewer are women. Strengthening our work in the labor movement and recruiting a greater share of people from oppressed groups is something that should be “consciously pursued.” In a discussion around local work, comrades shared notes on both the broad similarities and particular challenges of organizing in New Jersey, Iowa and North Carolina. Most of our membership is found in medium-sized cities geographically distant from the major metropolitan areas where the lion’s share of the organized left operates. The question arose of how we conduct ourselves in situations like this, where there may be little on-the-ground basis to campaign in the left for our politics of principled unity. Overall, comrades agreed that we should continue seeking a balance between practical intervention among the left - such as through our paper, regional / national left-wing gatherings, and working to establish the RP in the major cities - and building “on the ground” where we are present currently among the class at large.

Motions

After the organizational and financial reports, discussion on the draft submissions for the RP’s foundational documents began in earnest. Because the new constitution was essentially a tweak of the old one, the main changes being details (like synchronizing recall thresholds to 25% across all party bodies and using different names for committee officers), it passed with little fanfare - save for an amendment successfully moved by Josh Hollandsworth to maintain the position of “Second Secretary” as an officer of the Central Committee.

In contrast to the constitution, multiple sessions were devoted to discussing the new party

program. In moving his proposal, Gabriel Pierre described it as a significant improvement over the old one. The new program would unfold on broadly similar lines as before, and would of course have the same political orientation, but rewritten so as to clarify and strengthen the analysis of capitalism, the objective basis for socialist revolution and communism, and the basis on which the Communist Party of the future will be built.

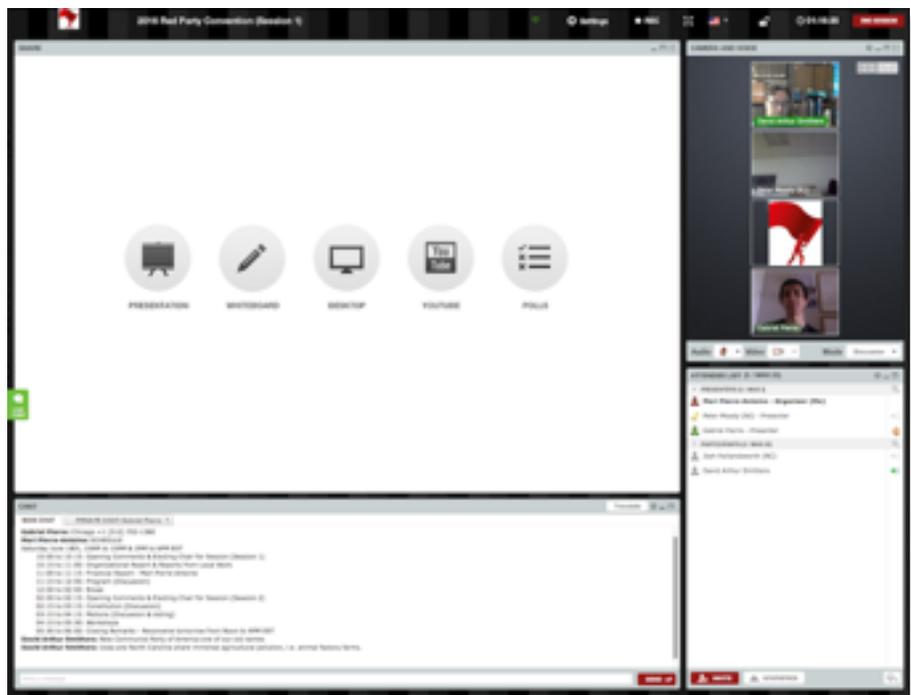
Section I, “Our Era”, describes the current world social order, stressing the role played by the main classes in society, the nature of the capitalist state and imperialism, and the necessity of international socialism. Section II, “For a Communist Party”, corrects a weakness of the previous program by elaborating further on the ‘party question’, including formally establishing “working class political independence, internationalism and extreme democracy” as our three guiding principles for left unity. This formulation, borrowed from the Communist Party of Great Britain, was already widely used in RP materials but had not been programmatically established before. In addition, the minimum program (immediate demands) in Section III was tweaked and its presence explained politically.

Delegates would return to the program at a later session, first going through various motions that had been submitted throughout the pre-convention period. Miah Simone’s and Gabriel Pierre’s motion to adjust the RP’s motto - from “freedom, solidarity and real democracy” to “... revolutionary democracy” - was uncontroversial and passed without much comment.

Peter Moody moved his proposal to change the party logo, introducing a

concept art inspired by the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista in Italy. The convention approved and instructed the next Central Committee to commission its production. Incumbent Treasurer Mari P-A moved a motion committing the Red Party to improving its infrastructure: our current website needs an enhancement, being the main way readers access our material, and our organizing efforts would be strengthened if we had pamphlets comrades could distribute on the ground. This motion also passed unanimously, with Gabriel Pierre intervening to emphasize the benefits of a quality mobile interface and Donald Parkinson, an observer from the Communist League of Tampa, holding up *Jacobin* as the visual standard to which the Red Party should compare itself.

Two motions (“Self Determination for All Oppressed Peoples,” proposed by Josh Hollandsworth, and “Tribal Societies and Dependent Nations,” proposed by David Smithers) were tabled for the Sunday session with the authors’ consent, as they were really about modifying the RP program. But there were two other motions on Saturday that generated significant discussion and debate. The first was Gabriel Pierre’s “Against Reflexive ‘No



Platform’,” which he wrote in response to a statement released by the Red Party North Carolina earlier in the year. The motion had generated debate in the pre-convention period, with Josh Hollandsworth claiming that it should not be taken up because it was unnecessary to legislate tactical considerations at this level. He also objected to the idea that the statement from North Carolina, which he authored, implied that the *state* should step in to ban ‘extremist speech’ from the right.

In his introduction, Gabriel stressed the importance of getting tactics right: a number of tactics may be called for in the battle against the far right, depending on the balance of forces and the concrete situation. He raised the British Socialist Workers Party as an example, an organization that stupidly insists on no-platforming the UK far right even when doing so is a detriment to the anti-fascist cause. However, he also clarified that he did not intend to imply that comrade Hollandsworth was in favor of state intervention on the right of free speech.

In his contribution, comrade Hollandsworth agreed that ‘no platforming’ was not applicable to all situations in which the left and the workers’ movement confronts the far right - and further, that the above-mentioned misunderstandings on both sides had generated a sense of disagreement where there was in reality less than first appeared. Both comrades agreed to a change of wording in the resolution that recognized the higher relevance of the ‘no platform’ tactic in the present period, and the motion passed with all in favor.

The last non-program motion, “For Joint Publication with the Communist League(s),” was moved by Peter Moody on behalf of Liam Fletcher. Donald Parkinson from the CL intervened to note that various Communist League members have had an interest in this for some time, as the politics of our two organizations are more similar than what is typically the case for the far left. Red Party members agreed about the potentials of a joint publication and that talks should be opened by the next CC to move

us in this direction. Comrades Moody and Parkinson offered initial thoughts on what basis these talks could start on - what kind of publication would it be? What are its editorial principles? Is the editorial board composed of both RP and CL members? After clarifying that what’s being sought is a new joint publication and not a merger of the *Red Vine* - at least not at this stage - the motion carried unopposed.

The final session for Saturday was dedicated to workshops. Gabriel Pierre hosted a presentation and discussion on writing for a communist publication, focusing on issues of composition. Josh Hollandsworth gave an informative presentation on the political economy of North Carolina and how its history has shaped the present situation there for the working class and oppressed peoples.

Finalizing Program

On Sunday, comrades got down to brass tacks on the new RP program before electing new leading bodies. The course of pre-convention discussion put delegates in a position where all were in favor of the program’s general course; consequently debate centered on refining the minimum program. Mari P-A moved an amendment to strengthen the message we send to LGBTQ people: while we naturally stand for “a right to quality housing” for all people, it’s worthwhile to address the specific problem of homelessness disproportionately affecting the LGBTQ community. A motion appending “provide housing and quality social services for LGBTQ and other displaced youth” to an existing plank was adopted unanimously.

Next came the composited motion from comrades Hollandsworth and Smithers on self-determination. The minimum program plank under consideration for revision, as drafted by Pierre, read as follows:

“The right of self-determination, up to and including independence, for all American Indian

nations, native Hawaiians, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Voluntary union as the basis of the democratic republic. Reparations to American Indian nations.”

The Hollandsworth-Smithers amendment proposed to name more colonial or semi-colonial holdings (namely the Northern Marianas, U.S. Virgin Islands and the former U.S. Pacific Trust Territory.) It also added text favoring self-determination for “*all ethnic or national minorities by democratic vote on a community-by-community basis.*” Comrade Hollandsworth argued that this was a principled means to address the question of Black self-determination, where the oppressed Black population is not a clear majority in any particular region but more distributed throughout the country with local majorities in certain areas.

Gabriel Pierre raised concerns, noting that the main thrust of Black liberation throughout U.S. history has been one of integration and equality, not separation. He argued that while we do need to address Black self-determination in some form, it was not a classical national question pure and simple (as Lenin pointed out in advice to the early American Communist Party.) His intervention sought to balance the need for self-determination with a recognition that there is no widespread sentiment for separation in Black America, and that in any case communists do not favor breakup into ever-smaller polities. If we are not careful, we end up calling for an independent people’s republic of Engelwood, Chicago.

Peter Moody spoke on the issue as well, raising a danger of going too far down the proverbial ‘rabbit hole’ and into a situation where the Red Party supports Balkanization of the United States. He further drew a distinction between cultural self-determination and community control on the one hand and political/economic self-determination on the other, which is where the danger of succumbing to nationalist politics and Balkanization lies. A discussion was generated by picking apart “self-determination,” with comrade Hollandsworth noting that the amended text is presented with the spirit of community control in mind - this passage allows us to connect with Black and Latino communities in a particular way, pointing toward an alternative society of increased democratic control at the ground level. In the end, the motion carried - with an abstention by comrade Moody, and with comrade Pierre voting in favor but going on record to express misgivings that the plank is blurry and open to varying interpretations.

After that, the new program as a whole was voted on and carried in its whole without opposition. Comrades then voted for the incoming Central Committee, whose size was enlarged to five members to ensure representation for members in various regions. Selection of officers from within the incoming CC was postponed to its first meeting.

5.

Communist Tactics and the Far Right

Resolution of the Red Party Convention



1. Tactics flow from principles. In order for workers and oppressed people to defeat the far right, we require tactical flexibility guided by the principle of working class political independence. This rules out the cross-class “popular front” but includes, depending on the concrete situation, any number of tactics employed in our movement’s history.
2. The fight against fascism is in the first place a political one. The rise of Donald Trump owes itself to the conditions created by capitalist crisis and the failure of the left to provide a serious alternative to despair. Without a mass party to identify the systemic causes of economic and social insecurity, right-wing demagoguery fills the vacuum in the minds of millions. “Anti-fascism” cannot be divorced from the struggle to build a Communist Party and rebuild the workers’ movement as a whole. It cannot be divorced from the political struggle to win support for socialism.
3. Forms of direct action, such as counter-demonstrations against far-right figures, are a useful tactic. In the current political climate, direct action tactics and the organizing efforts flowing from them should be seen as the primary, though not exclusive, means of combating the radical right. We fetishize neither pacifism nor violent confrontation. Sometimes, as in Chicago this March, protests are able to shut down or prevent the event from taking place. Where the far-right is suppressed it should be by the actions of the proletariat itself; communists should *not* call for the capitalist state to ban any form of speech. In arguing for restrictions on “radical”

speech, we hand the ruling class a weapon to use against the left.

4. Rather than rely on spontaneity, direct action should be linked to institution-building where possible. Where the left does not build these institutions, the radical right will – such as Golden Dawn’s “Greek only” food distribution programs. For physical defense we aim for workers’ self-defense guards, organized from the labor movement and oppressed people. In some cases the mere presence of such organizations is enough to

stave off physical threat from the far right, as in the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strike where the Union Defense Guard dissuaded the Nazi Silver Shirts from organizing in the city.

5. “No platform” as a principle weakens the struggle against reactionary ideas. Denying the far right a platform in particular instances can be the correct tactic, but generalized into a principle it reduces our argument to a moralistic appeal of “fascism is bad.” It is tantamount to claiming that the proletariat is not intelligent enough to discern between

emancipatory politics and poisonous politics. Far from legitimizing their ideas, arguing with reactionaries can expose the bankruptcy of those ideas to a mass audience. The German Communist Party in the 1920s, for example, not only organized defense groups to engage physically with Nazi cadre but ate away at their support base through public debate. In recent history, the British National Party’s electoral support rapidly collapsed after their leader Nick Griffin was eviscerated during an episode of the popular current affairs TV show *Question Time*.

Letters

Sanders, Stein and Soltysik

Now that Bernie Sanders is #ReadyforHillary, we should pause and consider what challenge the left is offering this election cycle against the crushingly dominant ideology of pragmatic lesser-evilmism.

On the June 30th episode of *The Nightly Show* Diane Guerrero, who plays Maritza on Netflix’s politically charged dramedy *Orange is the New Black*, summed up the most common liberal argument in Hillary Clinton’s favor: while we may not like it, the two choices on offer are “what we have”, so better hold your nose and turn

out to the polls lest we want to see Donald Trump in the White House!¹ With Bernie Sanders now firmly defeated, no serious progressive commentator contends that the Democratic Party presents a left-wing alternative to the existing political establishment. As opposed to Bernie Sanders’ social democratic program and calls for “political revolution” that mobilized large numbers of people (albeit into a capitalist party which was never in serious danger of being transformed from below), it’s untenable to spin a narrative of Hillary Clinton being anything other

than a creature of the establishment. Her candidacy promises to be a safe pair of hands as the CEO of American capitalism like any other. Thus, hold your nose and vote “D.”

How can the radical left reach out to those layers of the Sanders support base - or to workers and oppressed people more generally - who are not inclined to support Hillary Clinton? Ideally the left would have its own presidential campaign, one based on radical-democratic opposition to the existing state order. A campaign acting as a mass agitator,

educator and organizer, raising a set of immediate economic, social and democratic demands, and linking them to the need for international socialism. Unfortunately, we have not one but many claimants to being that sort of campaign: the Socialist Party USA, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Workers World Party, Socialist Workers Party, and now Socialist Action are all running competing candidacies. Generally these campaigns are useful for spreading basic class politics to a bigger audience than what would typically be possible, but their long-term impact is blunted because they seek to organize handfuls of people into a particular sect rather than a project that can become a mass party.

At least these comrades are starting from basically the right premise - that elections under capitalism are an arena of struggle and that it's possible to

agitate and organize around class-independent politics through an electoral campaign. The same can't be said for groups like the International Socialist Organization and now Socialist Alternative, which endorsed Jill Stein post-Bernie as part of the "huge space for the creation of a new broad left party of the 99%."² True enough, a decent chunk of 'Bernie or Bust'-ers are going to be sympathetic to Jill Stein and the Green Party, and general revulsion for Hillary Clinton can work in her favor. But votes for the Green ticket builds the profile of *the Greens*, not of any working-class political vehicle.

Ideally, there would be a project for socialist unity at this stage in the election cycle, which would cohere the various left groups around a shared candidacy and some kind of common platform. A united socialist campaign, even if

starting on the smaller end, would not only be a useful agitation and propaganda exercise now but would lay real groundwork for a party in the near future. But in the absence of that, we should work to strengthen one of the current socialist presidential campaigns - preferably Mimi Soltysik and Angela Walker of the Socialist Party USA, whose campaign offers more political space to push for the principled unity our movement needs.

- Gabriel Pierre

Notes

1. <http://www.cc.com/episodes/36dtke/the-nightly-show-with-larry-wilmore-june-30--2016---diane-guerrero-season-2-ep-02128>
2. <http://www.socialistalternative.org/2016/07/07/socialist-alternative-convention-marks-huge-step/>

Gorilla Lives Matter

During the 2016 Memorial Day weekend, news stories, memes, and postings on Facebook, about a toddler falling into a gorilla enclosure, resulting in zookeepers shooting a gorilla erupted in my corner of the social media. The memes bemoaned the killing, rather than tranquilizing of the gorilla, which some comments indicated would have taken too long to

make it safe to remove the child from danger, and stated that the 'protective' gorilla was a better creature than the inattentive bitch of a mother, although, both parents may have been present at the zoo, and crowds were a barrier to remedial parental action. Some even stated that the child and parents would have been better shot. Many ill wishes were expressed against the child

and mother and in mourning for the gorilla, an endangered species.

As the 2016 elections in the USA approach, and it looks likely that the major candidates for President are to be Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. In this Trump-Clinton land, probably the first time such elections so totally surrounded

by social media as both campaign and response, windows into the thinking and warped moral patterns of bourgeois America are especially noticeable and discerned. While the warped culture is seemingly most exposed by Trump and his racist and nativist supporters, it is also evident with regard to the Clinton campaign, as Hillary defends the ending of most welfare support for women and children and the buildup of police and prisons during the administration of Bill Clinton, during the 1990s, and a confrontation was indeed initiated against Black Lives Matters, an anti-police brutality and anti-police murdering of blacks and other people of color protest movement, by former President Bill Clinton, who characterized the movement as defending super predators.

Two of those alleged super predators included, in Ohio, in the past few years, a black child playing with a toy gun and a young black man about to purchase an air gun at a Wal-Mart who were killed by police. The nationwide death toll of gunning down of black men, deaths of black people who are arrested and held in jail, the heightened awareness of the existence of police brutality being made by efforts of Black Lives Matters, and similar efforts to raise awareness of Native American encounters with police, make police brutality, especially against people of color

a top social media topic, at least for me, on Facebook.

The Black Lives Matter movement has given rise to counter movements, especially by racist white Americans of 'All Lives Matter' and even 'Blue Lives Matter.' Now, amidst an electoral campaign season that denigrates the probability of anthropogenic climate warming and mass extinction, the possibility of an outsized role of a black parent and a black child in furthering the endangerment of a gorilla species, has seemingly fused racists, animal rights defenders, misogynists, and zoo critics in the chattering in, and editorializing directed at, and circulated with commentary in the Facebook social media (and, I assume Twitter, etc., as well).

Not only is the tragedy that a lowland gorilla at a Cincinnati Ohio zoo was shot instead of tranquilized a topic. The responsibility of and child neglect by a black woman (or in many memes. the bitch) for the death of an endangered species has become the center of social media commentary. Luckily, many people, especially parents recognize that a child can become endangered with even the slightest lapse of attentive consciousness of what happens in day-to-day life.

In the Miami *New Times* of Monday, February 3, 2014¹ Chuck Strouse writes about an alleged historic practice in the

American South of using black babies for alligator bait. A advertisement for a toilet and bath soap, Stainglo, shows a crawling African American baby about to be consumed by an alligator, with the saying, 'For the Removal of Colorations'. Strouse wrote,

"It has been pretty well documented recently that, during slavery and into the 20th Century, black babies were used as alligator bait in North and Central Florida."

I wonder where this practice and other abuses of images of people of color and especially black females / mothers plays in a subterranean American historical social psychological role in this discussion. Certainly the Ronald Reagan promoted image of welfare queens, i.e. black mothers, having profitable baby after baby, on relaxing welfare dole, fits right into the racism displayed, often violently at Trump rallies, and in Bill Clinton's verbal slap to African Americans during the primary battle of Hillary Clinton against critical Black Lives Matter activists, plays into subconscious thinking and language selection in discussion of the zoo incident.

So, with the images of black children and young adults being gunned down by police in my mind after seeing a post by a black female friend on Facebook about the story of a toddler getting into, actually falling,

into a gorilla enclosure at the zoo, and the toddler dragged through the water like a twig or fish by the large and strong animal, people afterwards anthropomorphized the gorilla as being initially protective of the child and frightened by the crowds. She said she wondered if the critical tone towards the mother was the fact that she was black. She found out that she was. The Facebook friend said that it seemed as if a bunch of white folks had suddenly become animal protectionists against the sullied cultural target of the black mother.

It took a while for me to find that the parents were in fact black, and even ran a daycare. Certainly, a child with serious, if non-life threatening injuries, and possible lifetime of nightmares, will be joined in suffering and in having nightmares by the child's parents and siblings. The daycare operation and integrity of the family may be threatened by authorities, customers, or random members of the public.

Fortunately many witnesses, fellow parents, and

non-shallow thinkers saved the weekend of reading postings, by defending the parents, saying that bad things happen all the time, to good people, and that crowd dynamics, zoo enclosure design, and negative race and gender images poisoned discussion about the tragedy of a zoo animal being put down.

And, while no one has yet posted, again, the alligator and black baby stories, in reference to this weekend's gorilla-child-mother-zoo social media maelstrom, one other person besides, myself, posted comments about how people of color, from Africa, the Philippines, and other places were exhibited in zoos and other public spectacles in the United States and Europe, at the turn of the 20th Century, deep in the era of racial imperialism and white man's burden.

So, maybe the lesson to be drawn is that capitalist zoos are not really good, or at least not an unmitigated good, for primates - human or gorilla. Yes, gorilla lives matter, but, I hope, those of our fellow humans

matter more. And, about anthropomorphizing about the intentions of gorilla, what can we say about the humanity of human behavior as images of a dead refugee toddler on an Aegean Sea beach and a black child's life threatening experience with a zoo gorilla, coincide with widespread apathy for the dead beach toddler or the antipathy and death wishes against the child and parents who experienced a near tragedy at a zoo outing. How protective are humans? So, how can we judge the potential actions of another primate, much stronger and unpredictable. Kill? Unfortunately, better safe than sorry.

Notes

1. <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/black-babies-used-as-alligator-bait-in-florida-6531453>

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Red Party is a U.S. political organization that fights for working class unity in a single socialist party-movement. A united organization, based on a Marxist program, would turn politics as we know it upside down, injecting the labor and social movements with a renewed sense of confidence and strength.

- * A united workers' party-movement would combine political action with economic and social action, including running socialist candidates for office, protests, strikes, co-operatives and mutual aid societies.
- * Our organization has the word party in its name, but we recognize that in the world-historic sense there is no revolutionary party in the U.S. today. Instead we have a fractured array of competing sects organized on a bureaucratic basis. Their work is hampered by hyper-activism with little to no long-term strategy, lack of internal democracy and lack of deep roots in the working class. The Red Party organizes day-to-day resistance against injustices spawned by capitalism within the context of strengthening working class organization and building support for socialism.
- * Marxists operate through democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we

seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form factions to advance their views.

- * Marxists oppose all imperialist wars and interventions, from Iraq to Syria, but recognize that ending war permanently means ending capitalism.
- * Marxists are internationalists. We strive for the closest unity of the working class and oppressed peoples everywhere. We oppose nationalism in all its forms. We advocate a new revolutionary workers' International. Without an International (a world party), the struggle against Capital is weakened. Capital organizes across borders; so too must we.
- * Marxists support industrial unions (organizing workers by industry) rather than the more narrow trade union structure. We support the highest possible level of pan-American union coordination for workers' rights. Bureaucratic leadership and class collaboration, particularly support for the Democratic Party, in the unions must be replaced with democratic revitalization and class independence.
- * Marxists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, racism, national oppression and LGBT/QI

oppression are just as much working class questions as are higher pay, union rights and struggles for quality health, housing and education. Marxists demand self-determination for American Indian nations, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and all other territories.

- * World capitalism, based on exploitation and a reckless quest for profit, is increasingly putting the future of humanity at risk through war and climate change. World capitalism must give way to world socialism - a society based on freedom, solidarity and a radical extension of democracy.
- * Marxists oppose Stalinism, a system of bureaucratic dictatorship that rules in the name of socialism the same way the capitalist class claims to rule in the name of liberty.
- * Socialism itself is the first stage of the global transition to communism - a society where war, exploitation, money, classes and states exist only as museum pieces. Communism is the negation of class society and provides the maximum individual and collective freedom.

If you agree with these principles, join the Red Party!

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