



# the yankee radical

(617) 354-5078

January 2008

## DSA Members Meeting

# Presidential Politics 2008—Who ? Why ?

**Date:** Sunday, January 13, 2008

**Time:** Arrive 3:30 P.M.

**Meeting & Social:** 4 P.M.—?

**Place:** 24 Bridge Street, Newton

At DSA's November convention delegates discussed a resolution opposing Hillary Clinton in the Presidential primaries as the most hawkish and pro-corporate of the Democratic contenders, supporting any Democratic nominee in the Fall election, but focusing most of our organizational energies on local and Congressional races. It was "tabled" with a favorable recommendation to our National Political Committee, which is now re-writing it while presumably coming to similar conclusions.

But although DSA won't endorse a candidate in the near future, and maybe not until after the primaries, we're sure our members and friends have a variety of views on this race. We hope to have supporters of Senators Edwards, Obama, and Rep. Kucinich give brief arguments for their candidates to kick off our general discussion. Even Senator Clinton has her progressive supporters, such as Congressman Jim McGovern, certain unions and feminist groups—if this description fits you, come and tell us why!

Before getting into Presidential politics we'll have a short briefing on efforts to forestall a possible U.S. attack on Iran from a representative of Peace Action .

And we'll also be electing a new Executive Board to lead Boston DSA into the new year. All four current members are running for re-election (probably a safe bet since the local is constitutionally mandated to have nine). If you'd like to join us, or are just wondering what a Board member does besides show up for monthly meetings, leave your phone number on the DSA answering machine (617-354-5878) and we'll get back to you. After the meeting (6 pm?) will be our usual social with pot luck supper and drinks.

The Patriots have obligingly not scheduled a playoff game this Sunday—so let's see you on January 13! For directions: contact our website, [www.dsaboston.org](http://www.dsaboston.org), or call 617-558-5853.

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# International Days of Action

**Dates:** Late January

**Time & Place:** See websites below.

In recent years the World Social Forum (WSF) has brought together pro-democracy, economic justice, environmental and anti-poverty groups to network under the slogan "Another World Is Possible". Previous Forums have taken place in Brazil (4 times), India, Venezuela, Mali, Pakistan and Kenya, along with regional ones in the United States.

For 2008, the WSF has called for an International Day of Action on January

26 to replace the forum. In other words, for this year the WSF will be everywhere!

Here in Boston a number of groups have taken up this call, and expanded it to include various events in late January. Unfortunately most of them have yet to be finalized as the YR goes to press. The few we're aware of include Mass Global Action's "Color of Water" campaign launch on 1/21, and a Noam Chomsky talk on the war sponsored by Bikes Not Bombs at Roxbury Community College on 1/31. Boston DSA is working with a Jobs

with Justice planning committee, which we hope will result in something on the trade issue, especially as it intersects with immigration.

For the time and place of these events and others contact the websites below, which should have the correct information by the time you read this.

**Boston Day of Action:**

[www.BostonDayofAction.org](http://www.BostonDayofAction.org)

**World Social Forum:**

[www.wsf2008.net](http://www.wsf2008.net)

**Jobs with Justice:**

[www.massjwj.net](http://www.massjwj.net)

## Short Takes

By Mike Pattberg

### Economic Justice Agenda Speaker

David Knuttunen is on a speaking tour of Massachusetts explaining DSA's new Economic Justice Agenda, described elsewhere in this issue. He's willing to go virtually anywhere with his power point presentation, and doesn't need the promise of a large crowd to do so—many of his talks take place in someone's living room. But also unions, schools, political organizations and religious groups may find this of interest. Contact webmaster @dsaboston.org, or call 617-558-5853.

### Mass Alliance Notes

—With a little help from Mass Alliance, 17 year State Rep (and former Boston DSA Chair) **Jim Marzilli** won a four-way “Special Election” primary last November to fill a vacant State Senate seat in the 4<sup>th</sup> Middlesex District, then went on to defeat two other candidates in the December 11 final. Being the only primary candidate to oppose Governor Patrick's casino plans cost Jim some labor support, but his strong showing in Arlington pulled him through. DSA sent out a postcard mailing to our members in the district pointing out some of his outstanding work in the legislature.

—In another Special Election primary called for February 5, Mass Alliance has endorsed **Katherine Clark** for the vacant State Rep. seat in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Middlesex District (Melrose, parts of Wakefield). She has been Chair of the Melrose School Committee, and is endorsed by former Rep. Mike Festa and Attorney General Martha Coakley, for whom she now works. She also aced the Alliance questionnaire. To volunteer email [voteclark@comcast.net](mailto:voteclark@comcast.net), call 781-620-1707, or drop by 414 Main Street, Melrose.



—Have you ever yearned to be one of those mysterious, behind the scenes string pullers—a Campaign Manager? They seem to thrive on all the hoopla and excitement of political campaigns, without the responsibility of governing afterwards. So here's your chance: On February 22 and 23, Mass Alliance is organizing the second of its grass roots

**Campaign Manager Trainings.** No experience necessary; tuition \$35.

Our state will see dozens of progressive electoral campaigns this year. To get the training and connections you need to get a job running one of them, call Georgia at 617-722-4320, or Georgia @ MassAlliance.org.

### Czech-Mating U.S. Bases

Back in the early Reagan years DSA member Joanne Landy and others founded the Campaign for Peace and Democracy East and West. It was a kind of mutual support network for pro-democracy oppositionists in both the U.S. and Soviet blocs, uniting progressive peace activists across cold war boundaries without supporting the anti-democratic or imperial policies of either “side”. CPDEW is now just the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, but they're still active as a small, NY-based human rights group.

Boston DSA has signed two of their latest petitions: Opposing U.S. military intervention in Iran (“Neither U.S. Aggression Nor Theocratic Repression”), and most recently in solidarity with a November 17 demonstration in Prague against the installation of a U.S. missile defense military base in the Czech Republic. The Prague-based No Bases Initiative group says it chose 11-17 because this date “has come to symbolize the overthrow of the undemocratic regime in the former Czechoslovakia and the return of representative democracy. This change came about because of the protest of hundreds of thousands of people in the streets of Prague 18 years ago”. In the view of these activists, resistance to the introduction of new foreign military bases is the most fitting way to commemorate that anniversary.

To read the full text, or add your name to those opposed to yet another unilateral projection of U.S. military force, visit [www.cpdweb.org](http://www.cpdweb.org).

### U.S.-China Sweatshops

Boston DSA Exec Board alumnus Peter Dreier has a piece in the December 6 Huffington Post “Off The Bus” feature, critiquing a recent Presidential candidates debate on NPR which “revealed ignorance about the realities of globalized trade and labor”, in this case U.S. corporations in China. He argues that,

contrary to the impression of the NPR moderators, Chinese workers only make 1% of the retail price of the clothing they produce, so that American companies making sneakers, clothing, toys and other goods there could certainly afford to improve wages and labor conditions for their Chinese workforce without U.S. consumers feeling much pain. The problem is that the corporations in question have made it clear they won't do this unless forced to by consumer pressure or public regulation.

Dreier notes that during the 1970's “most Nike shoes were made in South Korea and Taiwan. When workers there gained new freedom to organize and wages began to rise, Nike moved most of its production to China, Indonesia, and Vietnam—countries with weak labor laws and where workers are easily abused”. Nonetheless, “improving the living and working conditions of manufacturing employees in China—or Mexico, or Bangladesh—need not be at the expense of American workers or consumers. Using U.S. leverage to give workers in those countries the right to organize for unions, living wages, and safe workplaces actually benefits Americans”, as opposed to Wall Street and WTO policies pitting U.S. wage earners against those in low-wage countries, the proverbial race to the bottom.

Peter ends his article by urging the candidates to support the campaigns and policy proposals of the Worker Rights Consortium, the National Labor Committee, UNITE HERE, and United Students Against Sweatshops. For full text visit [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com).

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# Key Dems Back Bush Trade Pact

By Lori Wallach

Although not one U.S. labor, environmental, Latino, consumer, faith or family farm group supported the Peru free trade agreement (FTA), a majority of Senate Democrats on December 4th broke with their base, dismissed widespread public opposition to more-of-the-same trade policy, and joined Republicans to deliver another Bush NAFTA expansion to the large corporations pushing this deal.

The debate in the Senate contrasts with that in the House of Representatives last month. There was little focus on the Peru NAFTA expansion deal in the Senate, but in the House an intense, multi-month debate resulted in a majority of House Democrats, including 12 of 18 House committee chairs, voting against the Peru pact, signaling it is not an acceptable model for future trade agreements.

The passage of the Peru FTA, which was overwhelmingly opposed in the United States and Peru, is bad foreign policy, bad

domestic policy and egregiously bad politics. Both of Peru's labor federations, its major indigenous people's organization and its archbishop called on the U.S. Congress to oppose the deal based on projected damages to Peru's small farmers and the environment.

The Peru NAFTA expansion replicates many of the CAFTA provisions that led most Democratic senators to oppose that pact. This includes: foreign investor privileges that create incentives for U.S. firms to move offshore and expose basic environmental, health, zoning and other laws to attack in foreign tribunals; bans on "Buy America" and anti-offshoring policies; limits on food import safety standards and inspection rates; and NAFTA-style agriculture rules that are projected to displace tens of thousands of Peru's Andean farmers and thus increase coca production and immigration. The pact also contains terms that could subject Peru to compensation claims for reversing its

unpopular Social Security privatization, the same system Democrats fought against at home.

The message of the midterm elections was loud and clear: Voters want a new direction on trade. Congress' public approval rating will not be helped by ignoring this call and passing another Bush NAFTA expansion.

*Lori Wallach is Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch Division ([www.citizen.org/trade/](http://www.citizen.org/trade/)), from which this article was taken.*

*In Massachusetts, Senators Kennedy and Kerry both voted for the Peru Trade Bill, as did Congressmen Frank, Neal and Lynch; opposed were Congressmen Capuano, Delahunt, Markey, McGovern, Olver, Tierney and Tsongas. Among Presidential candidates, Clinton and Obama were for; Biden, Dodd, Edwards and Kucinich against.*

## SEIU 1199 Wins Biggest Union Election in Massachusetts History!

By Harris Gruman

November 7<sup>th</sup> culminated a three-year effort by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to organize one of our state's most essential, yet neglected workforces. On that day, over 6000 ballots were counted and the desire of Massachusetts home care workers was clear: 94% voted to form a union with 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. With this election, 22,000 Personal Care Attendants, or PCA's, have won the right to collectively bargain for living wages, health benefits, sick days, and vacation time. These are the people who take care of seniors and people with disabilities so they can stay in their own homes rather than receive care in institutions. Now they can take better care of themselves *and* their clients.

This victory makes SEIU the largest labor union in the state. With over 500 members in every state legislative district, the union can forcefully raise issues that benefit all working families—like universal health care, living wages, paid sick days, progressive taxes, and the right to organize. And at 1.9 million members, SEIU is also the only U.S. international

union that's growing. It has done this by focusing on expanding sectors of the workforce that are not easily relocated or outsourced, yet lack living wages and benefits: long-term care and health workers; human service and child care providers, custodians and security guards.

The Justice for Janitors campaigns, for example, organize an entire market for janitorial services *before* holding a union election. As a result, all companies are held to the same standards of wages and benefits, preventing the undercutting of union shops by low-wage competitors. That's how SEIU Local 615 recently organized 16,000 Boston-area janitors.

PCA's were similarly in need of a union. 1199 SEIU waged a two-year labor-community campaign to pass legislation at the State House allowing collective bargaining with the Commonwealth for fair wages and benefits. Organizations that represented consumers, such as Mass Senior Action, the Boston Center for Independent Living and the MA Home Care Association joined our campaign, arguing that better working conditions for the personal care attendants meant better

care for senior citizens and people with disabilities. Simultaneously, the Affordable Care Today Coalition (ACT!), led by Health Care For All, lobbied to expand coverage for home care as a more independent and less expensive alternative to institutional care. After extensive call-in and letter-writing campaigns, State House rallies, and qualifying the measure for the state ballot, the PCA bill passed both houses of the legislature and overrode Mitt Romney's veto *unanimously*.

The forming of a 22,000 member union in one election is a first in Massachusetts. And by this time next year, campaigns to organize 2000 human service providers, 4000 security guards, 4500 child care providers, 25,000 nursing home workers, and over 50,000 hospital workers will either have been won, or be well underway, doubling the size of Massachusetts SEIU over the next few years. This is good news for working families, progressive politics and economic justice.

*Former Boston DSA Chair and Director of MA Neighbor to Neighbor Harris Gruman is now MA Political Director of SEIU.*

# DSA National Convention

*Democratic Socialists of America held its 2007 Convention November 9-11 in Atlanta.*

## Convention Reflections

By Paul Garver

I wasn't sure what to expect as I flew into Atlanta for the DSA National Convention. For me Atlanta had been a location for civil rights organizing meetings in the 1960s, and many decades later in the 2000s a place to negotiate over global union rights issues with the Coca-Cola Company. I did not associate it with democratic socialism.

But Atlanta also proved to be a congenial location for a DSA convention, held at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union hall. Much of the credit goes to the newly revitalized Atlanta chapter led by Milt Tambor, a recently transplanted AFSCME union officer from Detroit who has utilized his considerable organizing skills to recreate a DSA local firmly linked to the labor and civil rights' movements.

This was evidenced in a large, enthusiastic and multiracial turnout for the Frederick Douglas-Eugene V. Debs dinner, honoring Charlie Flemming, president of the Atlanta North Georgia Labor Council, and Alice Lovelace, lead organizer for the U.S. Social Form held in Atlanta earlier in 2007. U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders gave the keynote speech, not only recognizing the role DSA played in raising funds for his campaign, but demonstrating that he could articulate our political positions in a language accessible to most Americans.

The most extended debate was over the adoption of our Economic Justice Agenda, which set forth a series of progressive policy proposals. The document will be finalized in a few months, and the intention is to use it to generate public discussion within the democratic left community about priorities for reform in the post-Bush era.

A very hopeful sign is the relatively rapid growth of the YDS, fueled by an enthusiastic cadre of young leaders and a talented full-time organizer, David Duhalde. There are campus YDS groups gaining a toehold in some remote rural and small town areas—like Central Arkansas!

But the organizational challenge remains to build more active locals while also using modern technology to enable those with common interests scattered around the country to “network” together more effec-

tively on joint projects. DSA labor activists are working to create a blog that will help facilitate common work in that area.

One disappointing aspect of the convention was the absence of any strong awareness that democratic socialism is an international movement, strongly rooted in northern Europe and parts of Latin America. Having lived most of the last two decades outside the USA working in the global labor movement, I had learned to expect participants or observers from other countries at any socialist or labor conference. (One of the few was Hans Janitschek, former President of the Socialist International). In a rapidly globalizing world, a viable socialist movement has to develop international connections and alliances. DSA's membership in the S.I. should mean something more than paying dues to that (admittedly flawed) organization.

But all in all we left this DSA convention unified on key political and organizational questions. And, as they say, the future lies ahead.

*Former DSA National Political Committee member Paul Garver has recently retired from the International Union of Foodworkers. He now coordinates DSA work with Jobs with Justice.*

## National Political Committee Report to Convention

*(Excerpted for reasons of space)*

In analyzing the work of DSA for the past period, one point is worth noting: the almost complete absence of serious internal divisions within the organization. No factions formed around issues such as whether or not to support a particular presidential candidate; whether to invest in third-party efforts; which coalitions to join or cooperate with; what singular approach to take to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; whether to support the war in Iraq or even oppose the quickest of withdrawals. Better yet, no factions formed around battling strategic worldviews.

Freud's “narcissism of small differences” hasn't manifested itself. Instead, just as at the 2003 Detroit convention and the 2005 Los Angeles convention, planning for this convention has been motivated by a concern for making DSA a larger and more effective organization, and one that can advance

goals on which we all basically agree.

DSA is still a small organization—hideously small given the scale of what the American Left needs to accomplish—but we're not as small as we were a few years ago. One reason for our growth: the improved political climate that welcomes activist government initiatives and gives a hearing to radical politics. But we believe another reason is that the past few NPCs have operated not by passing large numbers of finely tuned resolutions (though there have been some, and should be) but by developing national programs that provide leadership and resources to our locals and members.

Starting with the 2001 Philadelphia convention, we looked for ways that the national organization and the locals could do joint work on issues of economic justice, an area that stems from our core values as socialists. Another reason is that, small as we are, these issues allow us to make good use of the strengths that we do have. Among these strengths are:

- Our members, whether in locals, YDS chapters or at-large, constitute a community of activists around the country. We are capable of making a modest but real intervention, politically and educationally, in a dozen or so metropolitan areas (most significantly in Detroit, Atlanta, San Diego, and Boston, and more modestly in Columbus, Ithaca, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and, upon occasion, Sacramento, the East Bay and elsewhere), plus a dozen campuses.
- We have ties to labor movement leaders and activists who organize around these issues, and some standing in the academic and policy communities that think and write about them.
- We have a Web site that we use to promote our views.
- We have name recognition within the wider left-liberal and progressive communities.

For better or worse, these strengths do not translate into an ability to intervene seriously in national electoral politics. For the 2008 elections, almost all DSAers want the Democrats to increase their Congressional majority, and for a

*(Continued on page 5)*

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Democrat to be elected president. Of the Democratic candidates competing for the nomination, Hillary Clinton represents the neo-liberal, Democratic Leadership Council, hawkish wing of the Democratic Party, so it is easy to oppose her. The other candidates each have supporters and detractors. Since we do not have the ability to intervene in the process as an organization in any major way, the NPC did not think it would be useful to spend much time at this convention on the nomination question—in part because we have valued members active in the Edwards, Obama, and Kucinich campaigns, as well as activists critical of each of these campaigns. However, there may well be Congressional, State, and local races where DSA participation can make a difference.

In fact, since the 2005 Los Angeles DSA Convention, the single most successful application of this approach has been the participation in the Bernie Sanders Senate campaign by DSA PAC. We held 13 events and raised some

\$60,000 for the Sanders run. These gatherings introduced DSAers to a wide range of Sanders supporters, while raising DSA's visibility nationally and locally.

The DSA Economic Justice project has developed slowly; in part, because so little can be done under the current reactionary administration. Our activity has been to prepare ourselves for January 2009 when we hope opportunities open up under a new administration that may be more subject to pressure from its core progressive supporters. In the interim, we have devoted our energy to producing and publicizing a draft Economic Justice Agenda.

The document serves two purposes; first, as an educational exposition of our general approach to a different kind of economy for the U.S., but also as a guide for specific activist projects, such as health care, the right to form and join a union, climate change, etc.

A number of activities around this project have already taken place. DSA organized several well-received panels at the U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta, two in conjunction with United for a Fair Economy. In part, it

has been well-received because few mainstream political forces, certainly almost no Democratic elected officials, can coherently defend the democratic vision behind a politics of progressive taxation, inclusive immigration policy, and high-quality public provision of basic human needs; i.e., as weak as social democracy may be in the United States, old-style liberalism is fading almost as quickly as members of the Greatest Generation.

DSA participates in anti-war activities, and is a member of United for Peace and Justice. This reflects not just our opposition to militarism but our approach to working in coalitions at the national and local level. Our membership in the Socialist International permits us a unique role in cooperating with not only representatives of center-left governments but with insurgent movements worldwide. DSA's International Commission hosted a four city Midwest tour by Saul Escobar Toledo, International Secretary of the Mexican PRD. Since the well-deserved demise of Social Democrats U.S.A., DSA is the only U.S. representative in the S.I.

# Convention Resolutions

The Political Priorities Resolution passed with much discussion but little dissent. Among the highlights:

- DSA will “continue to work to end the war in Iraq and resist efforts to create a wider war by escalating conflicts with Iran”, while also opposing the “hegemonic domination of international relations by a few countries and corporations”.
- DSA will “use the Economic Justice Agenda to inject progressive policy options and analysis into political debates and public forums surrounding candidacies for national office in 2008, especially races for the House of Representatives”
- After the fall elections DSA will explore the possibility of a speaking tour debunking myths against single payer national health care by Canadian, U.S. and other progressive health experts.
- DSA will also work to further other core parts of our EJA, including: a fair revenue system based on progressive taxation; shifting resources away from “inefficient redundant and unnecessary military expenditures” and toward human needs; and extending the human rights of all workers, including immigrants, and in particular the right to organize..
- A “Solidarity with Chinese Workers” resolution noted that “The 2008 Olympics present a unique opportunity to build solidarity with workers in China”, urging DSA locals to “get involved with the international ‘play fair’ campaigns and similar efforts”.
- Observing that 2008 is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Memphis Sanitation Workers strike, the convention urged DSA locals to take advantage of recent scholarship that has “recalled the democratic socialist vision of Martin Luther King”, and “also promote A.Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin” (despite the latter’s neo-conservative drift in later years).
- The convention encouraged DSA members and locals to explore Solidarity Economics, a broad area of inquiry which involves “activities such as cooperatives and worker self-managed enterprises that can be started even under capitalism but that include elements of a better economic order”.
- Our own David Knuttunen was re-elected to the National Political Committee. Three new Vice Chairs were also elected: long time democratic socialist Ruth Spitz, former Boston DSA Chair Joe Schwartz, and labor scholar-activist Elaine Bernard.

# Michael Harrington Forum

*On November 15 the Tamiment Library in NYC held a symposium celebrating the life and work of DSA Founding Chair Michael Harrington (1928-1989) and the official opening of the Harrington Papers. Invited speakers included DSA National Director Frank Llewellyn. This event produced commentary on dsamember, DSA's Internet discussion group, which is sampled below.*

**Mike Hirsch:** Kudos to Frank, who did an excellent job of presenting the argument that Mike was a socialist organizer and strategist who spent his life building movements and organizations. That was something no other speaker was going to say (which we expected) or did say, and Frank was well received.

Here's what was good about the gathering: It was a fine tribute to Mike Harrington the man, and a peek at some unpublished material of Mike's that the library is only now ready to make available to researchers and the public.

What was not so good? Frank aside, it was pretty useless in offering insights on political strategies today. EJ Dionne of the Wash Post was a terrific speaker who did as much as anyone could to make one feel Mike's presence in the room, and Maurice Isserman did a good job of surveying some of the library's archives on the young, Bohemian, Catholic Worker moving-toward-Marxist Mike. Todd Gitlin raised a series of questions he'd have liked to have asked Mike (mostly good enough questions) about the years from his death in 1989 to today, but when it came to answering them, Todd was at sea.

Just on Gitlin: Todd's pretty conservative these days, though he's no Paul Berman either, in politics or manner. He's quite thoughtful and measured and not deserving of all the brickbats he gets. He also thinks the only viable thing a "left" can fight for that can get us out from under the thumb of neoliberals and corporations is campaign-finance reform; and this said to Frank and me privately, after the session. He's a big believer in the Big Tent, Robert Rubin, hedge funders and all. Makes me think DSA should stop talking about a big tent and start using the "same boat, different accommodations" metaphor, and how we need to fight for posh staterooms for the working class on the SS Democracy, not the steerage the current Democratic leadership provides.

**Ken Schaeffer:** Michael Harrington was brought to life for a few hours as friends and comrades gathered to celebrate the opening of the Michael Harrington

collection at NYU's Tamiment Library on Thursday, November 15.

It was William F. Buckley who said of Mike that being the leading socialist in America is like being the tallest building in Topeka. But the world is young.

Todd Gitlin spoke of Mike as a tragic figure, a man without a generation, caught in the generational conflict between the 1930s and the 1960s. Gitlin described Mike as a work in progress, the spiritual wing of secular humanism, but was off target in citing Durkheim's belief that "socialism is not a theory but a cry of pain". That was not Mike. For him socialism was both a theory and practice for a better world based on cooperation, not competition, meeting human needs democratically.

Norman Dorsen, past president of the ACLU—a friend of Mike and Stephanie's from the Village Voice and White Horse days—described Mike the eternal optimist, even when he supported unpopular causes or long shots such as Milovan Djilas.

Maurice Isserman spoke of Mike's preference for paradoxes, and here's one: Mike knew that a better world is possible, although he was an empiricist, and by definition there can be no evidence that this is true. It is a faith as well as an induction, but a faith based on the most rigorous knowledge of the world and human nature. Just as Karl Marx spent most of his days after 1848 in the British Museum Library, Mike read the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times business section daily, both to know what the other side knows, and to contest them in the critical battle for ideas which rages on uneven terrain in human society and which we must win because, as Bill Fletcher Jr. told the DSA convention in Atlanta last weekend, failure is not an option.

**Tim Sears:** Mike was the principal author of the Socialist International's new statement of principles, but he found the process of writing-by-committee maddening. The initial draft he wrote was absolutely brilliant—some of the best he ever wrote. But at the SI Congress in Lima, Peru in 1986, it was roundly criticized by those (particularly from the French

Socialist Party) who were essentially Blairites before Tony Blair and considered his draft excessively "utopian." They insisted on major changes to tone it down. Mike also wrote the final version that was adopted, which is quite good, but he was really frustrated with the whole thing. Mike, Jim Chapin and I were DSA delegates at the Lima Congress. I remember Mike and Jim talking about whether we should publish his original draft as a DSA pamphlet. Someplace I must still have a copy of the original draft...

**Bogdan Denitch:** As the person who recruited Mike to the YPSL in the Spring of 1952 I want to stress three things about him: (1) He was a left-bohemian intellectual, very much interested in literature and regarded himself as a poet and writer. For several years he was very much on the Village scene and most Fridays we drank, first at the White Horse and later at my place on Greenwich Street. "We" were a younger group from Catholic Worker and a few pals. (2) He was a full time Socialist activist and organizer. He spent ten years touring the country, speaking, debating and participating in organizational activities of a small left-socialist youth organization with some dozen campus chapters. He was, by choice, a full time socialist cadre until the seventies when he got a "real" job teaching at Queens College where he remained very active in both the local chapter and as a national figure. One could even say, alas, THE national figure. (3) He was serious about politics and theory. His books are a monument to that seriousness. They remain relevant today. Of the three great figures of the American socialist movement, such as it was, Debs, Thomas and himself, Mike was the most important figure intellectually, and like Thomas spent his life trying to build a movement. Unlike Thomas he never gave up the idea that it might be possible to build a significant socialist presence in the US. In that he differed from most academic socialists with roots in the New Left.

He was my best friend.

# 2007 DSA Award Reception

Last September 27 Boston Democratic Socialists of America presented the 2007 Debs-Thomas-Bernstein Award to our first “couple”—Chris Tilly, recently retired from two decades with *Dollars and Sense* magazine, and architect, educator and community activist Marie Kennedy. The award is named after Gene Debs, Norman Thomas and Julius Bernstein, democratic socialist leaders of the last century. It was presented by Carline Desire from the Association of Haitian Women in Boston before about 50 friends and comrades at the historic Jamaica Plain home of Marcia Peters and David Karaus.

In response, Chris Tilly observed that the right wing coalition which has dominated U.S. politics in recent decades seems to be



*Carline Desire with Marie and Chris*

falling apart—social conservatives, big business, and the neo-con empire builders are discovering they don’t like each other! What will replace this ruling coalition is unclear, but progressives now have a chance to be heard.

Marie Kennedy spoke of her work in Haiti and Latin America to empower local communities, noting that newly assertive indigenous people are a key part of the resurgent left there, not only in politics but culture and art as well. Also speaking was Boston City Councilor Felix Arroyo, who presented Marie and Chris with an honorary resolution from the City, and East Boston State Rep candidate Gloribell Mota, who recounted her recent defeat with warmth and humor. Maybe next time!

Thanks to all who helped make this event a success, including Felix Arroyo, Elaine Bernard, Carline Desire, Susan Davidoff, Mike Pattberg and MC Dave Knuttunen.

## Honoring Marie Kennedy and Chris Tilly

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