

sds News Bulletin

official publication of students for a democratic society
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Drama | Education | Funk

OUR WEAPONS VS. THE WAR



FROM COAST TO COAST, TURNING EMPIRE

Upside-Down

Leadership (?) • Our conventions • *Their* convention
PLUS! A not for dinner-table discussion: SDS & religion



SIGN “☪” THE TIMES? I took this photo at the Port of Olympia on Sunday Nov. 11, the day after the first period where the PMR blockades successfully held the convoys back - before police stepped in. With heavy police presence, disabled Strykers were being transported out of the Port by truck. Two brave individuals (I'm not sure if they were SDSers or not), one of whom was carrying this sign, jumped into the street and lay down in front of a moving Stryker-laden semi truck. The truck stopped and riot police moved in. The pair were pepper sprayed at point blank range, then dragged off the street, back onto the sidewalk. A few minutes later it was evident that their efforts had really only made a slight disturbance in the flow of Army traffic. All that was left was this lonely signboard lying in the gutter - a desperate plea for rationality splattered with the sickly orange of violence. - **Peter Von der Porten, Reed SDS**

a message from the working group that brought you this issue of

sds News Bulletin

Welcome to the third issue of the SDS News Bulletin, the growing national publication of Students for a Democratic Society. We intend for this publication to be an accessible and popular vehicle for SDS members and chapters to communicate, coordinate actions, share information and ideas, and inspire one another in our struggles.

The News Bulletin was formed through a proposal of the 2007 SDS National Convention in Detroit and passed by consensus of the 200+ attendees. Every Tuesday night since August the members of the Bulletin Working Group have met by conference call.

The working group is open to all SDS members, so get involved! Join up on our listserv:

groups.google.com/group/sds-news-bulletin

And start jumping on the calls. We won't bite. We're fun and we need your support.

You can download the PDF of this issue (or previous issues) on the national SDS website:

www.newsds.org

Print out copies to distribute to your chapter. Give them to people who would like to start chapters. Bring them to conventions.

We will also be putting supplementary content and links on our blog:

sdsnewsbulletin.wordpress.com

We received far too many submissions to print in the previous issues, a great precedent to maintain. We're already getting started for the next issue, so submit and be heard! We welcome reports from actions/events, visual art, reviews, opinion pieces, how-to articles, chapter reportbacks, poems, songs, essays, stories or any other relevant category your imaginative minds can think of.

Send all submissions to:
sds.bulletin@gmail.com

SDSNB #3

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“Rose in a Fisted Glove”
illustration by Edward Bayley, University of Delaware SDS

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"WE WON'T GO!"

Organizing to Stop Gentrification

by Lindsay Hagerman, Boston SDS

On the morning of January 23, six members of Boston SDS joined a gathering to physically block the eviction of Melonie Griffiths-Evans and her three children from their home in Dorchester, Mass. Fifteen-hundred other Boston families currently face similar eviction notices, as thousands of Bostonians and countless others across the country fight foreclosures resulting from sub-prime predatory loans.

Organizations like US Bank and Ocwen Financial engage in practices including, but not limited to: using false appraisals to sell properties for much more than they are worth, charging fees for unnecessary or nonexistent services, pressuring borrowers to accept high-risk loans, intentionally lending more money than a borrower can afford to repay, encouraging borrowers to lie about their finances in order to get a loan, and advising borrowers that they know are in need of cash due to medical, employment, or debt problems to "cash-out" refinance offers.

These predatory practices accelerate gentrification in cities across the country, including many places with SDS chapters. Predatory lending companies play a key role in forcing lower income people of color out of their communities, making way

for so-called "urban renewal" efforts to raise property values (read: control as much property as possible until it can be sold for bigger profits to richer, whiter people). Unfortunately, students often are the first-wave of "gentrifiers" since so many of us seek the cheapest housing possible as tuition rates skyrocket, and many of us with white privilege ignore the racist implications of our housing decisions. But fortunately, we have an incredible opportunity as an organization to play a key role in raising awareness about the consequences of which "cheap housing" we choose, in addition to pursuing organizing strategies to reverse current trends.

As SDS chapters, we can fight the battle against gentrification on many fronts simultaneously:

1) *We can promote personal accountability by choosing alternative options for cheaper housing that do not contribute to the invasion of communities targeted for gentrification.*

2) *We can organize campaigns to stop colleges and universities from buying up property in gentrifying communities. As part of one such effort, there was a recent forum in Boston to discuss Northeastern University's expansion into Roxbury, forcing out long-time residents. Elsewhere, at Boston College, Harvard University, and Boston University, administrators plan to expand into Allston and Brighton. Boston College has an eight billion dollar, 10 year expansion plan to displace residents, and to do so without any provisions for environmental sustainability. Students at each of these schools are voicing their opposition.*

3) *We can develop long-term, accountable relationships with community groups organizing against gentrification, including grassroots*

organizations fighting predatory lenders.

In this most recent example from Boston, a grassroots group – City Life/Vida Urbana – called for supporters to help block an eviction. Dozens of people of all ages from around the city turned out. We chanted lots of things, but one that made me smile for the profound connections it implied was the traditionally anti-war slogan, "We won't go! We

Predatory lending companies play a key role in forcing lower income people of color out of their communities

won't go!" US Bank quickly withdrew the order for eviction.

After receiving word on the phone that her family would not be evicted (at least for the time being), Griffiths-Evans told reporters, "These bankers need to know we're going to do the same thing at every property. For everybody who is down and out because they're being put out of their homes: we're going to take back our city, we're going to do what's right for the families and not what's right for the bankers." In that spirit, I hope we can ally SDS with these important movements and work towards ending any complicity we have with gentrification.

No Education, No Life

a report on the Baltimore Algebra Project's fight for public education

by Nicole Davis, DC SDS, American University SDS and Gibson Forsyth, Drew SDS

The Baltimore Algebra Project (BAP) is a student run organization that provides one-on-one math tutoring for socio-economically disadvantaged public school students. They also fight for free, quality education through direct action. Recently, the Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley cut school funding by \$50 million instead of the \$800 million increase he had promised. BAP responded with an action on February sixth in the state's capital of Annapolis.

The day started with a conference and rally in a church, followed by a march and civil disobedience action,

resulting in 25 arrests. A coffin and caution tape came to symbolize the crime scenes that result at the hands of bureaucratic neglect of the crumbling school system. A particularly personal part of this "crime scene" was that the coffin commemorated BAP member Zachariah Hallback, who was shot and killed while waiting for a bus near the scene of a robbery. This tragedy is what BAP means with the slogan "No Education, No Life!" Insufficient education is as good as a death sentence for many youth and means more violent crime when the poor run out of options. As those participating in the

civil disobedience crossed the “crime scene” tape to die-in at the steps of the state house, the crowd below rallied support, the media swarmed to capture images, and the cops stood baffled and inadequately prepared to handle this action.

Their organizing skills and effectiveness were impressive, especially since this was BAP’s first attempt at a civil disobedience action. The students have the support of their teachers and the community: this protest was even an official class field trip and students came by the bus load! Even media attention was almost entirely positive.

Unlike the general trend to play a prominent organizing role, this time SDSers were there in a support capacity, as 11 white students and youth in solidarity with a larger group not possessing the same racial or class privilege of many of us. We participated in the action as bodies of support, with SDSers accounting for seven out of the 25 arrests. Beyond that we were background, as it was essential that we step back and take direction from the youth most affected by the issue, much in line with SDS’ principle of participatory democracy.

It was inspiring to see hundreds of youth empowered to claim control over all aspects of their lives; their agency in fighting for their future was apparent and gave the entire action a subtle, yet powerful energy.

While it’s great that we are continually growing as an organization and getting our name out in the media, it’s important we are doing so with an analysis of appropriate community solidarity and know when to step back and support others when the time comes too.



Getting organized ahead of the RNC

by Tracy Molm, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities SDS

In February, organizers from around the country joined us at the University of Minnesota to help start planning for the Republican National Convention that will be held in St. Paul, Minnesota, September 1-4.

March on the RNC and Stop the War, a coalition of peace and justice groups in the Twin Cities focused on Iraq and the Sept. 1 protest, brought in representatives from International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), TONC (Troops Out Now Coalition), UFPJ (United for Peace and Justice), LAW (Latinos Against War in Los Angeles), and many other organizations to build for the RNC. Speakers from these organizations spoke of the need to build unity to get many people in the streets on Sept. 1.

And students played a huge part. At the conference there were breakout sessions for different areas and discussions. At the student and youth breakout session we were able to discuss across different student and youth groups the need to form a student and youth feeder march starting at local Macalester College where we

will have our own opening rally focused on issues faced by students and youth. “The DNC in ’68 was a great radicalizing experience for SDS, and now we’re hoping that the RNC in ’08 can do the same for the new SDS. At the student and youth meeting we were able to build a lot of excitement for a large student and youth feeder march on Sept. 1 where we will fill the streets of St. Paul, Minn. with thousands of young people who want the war in Iraq to end!” said Lauren Siegel, U of MN SDS member.

“The people united will never be defeated,” became one of the signature chants of the weekend. Many praised the great work done by the individuals and groups that had worked in the Twin Cities as part of the coalition March on the RNC and Stop the War to make this conference happen. And the organizers in the room proved that despite huge differences in tactics and politics we will make the largest movement possible by building together. SDS at the University of Minnesota and Macalester SDS hope that you join us in Minnesota in September!

*NATIONAL DAYS OF
STUDENT ACTION*

Against the Iraq War

ALL OUT FOR MARCH 20, 2008: This March will mark a grim milestone – the fifth anniversary of the illegal and immoral invasion of Iraq. We are calling on any and all student and youth based organizations that are opposed to the war in Iraq to mobilize their memberships, their campus, their community and hit the streets for the week of March 17-21, with March 20 as the focal point.*

We are calling on students to take action on their own campuses, where we have the power to reach the entire student body with our message and build resistance on our own campuses. We are calling on our fellow students and youth to take the lead and do whatever it takes – from rallies, marches, walk-outs, civil disobedience, and direct action – to send a clear message to the U.S. government: Get out of Iraq Now!

Students for a Democratic Society
March 20th Working Group

Contact march20sds@gmail.com if you would like to sign on to the call.

for the full call to action and the list of endorsers, check out <http://march20sds.wordpress.com/>



IVAW and SDS team up for

GUERRILLA THEATER

The members of UNC-Asheville Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Asheville chapter of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) oppose the unjust and immoral war being waged by the U.S. government against the people of Iraq. We oppose this war for many reasons. In particular, we oppose the war because it violates the sovereignty of Iraq's people and their national right to self-determination. Furthermore, the U.S. government forces service members to fight an illegal war. We recognize that the military-industrial complex, corporate profiteering and imperialist designs fuel this war on an oil-rich and strategically important region.

In order to voice our opposition, UNCA SDS and IVAW-Asheville chose to set up a counter-recruitment table across from the U.S. Marine Corps table. During this time, we staged a mock raid involving mem-

bers of SDS and IVAW. Two IVAW members and two SDSers stormed the Student Union and seized three students playing the roles of Iraqi civilians. The "soldiers" were dressed in combat gear and the "civilians"



photo from Asheville Citizen-Times (reprinted w. permission)

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD: Guerrilla theater brings scenes from Iraq to Asheville.

were dressed in traditional Iraqi garb. The "soldiers" shouted commands (with profanity) to the "civilians" to get on the ground, forced them down, interrogated them, zip-tied their hands, placed sacks over their heads, and took them away. IVAW-Asheville president Jason Hurd said, "This scenario is based entirely in reality. It is based on the first-hand experience of Mike Robinson, a fellow IVAW member and participant in this action. I also spoke personally with many Iraqi citizens during my tour who explained that raids like this one occur daily in occupied Iraq."

The guerrilla theater that took place on the fifth is in no way meant as an attack on individual military members, but rather as a statement against war and militarism as well as an indictment against the criminal regime here at home. Our government exploits U.S. soldiers who come predominantly from

working-class and oppressed communities. Only the rich profit from this war. Therefore, we express solidarity with all U.S. service members; we see them as our

natural allies in the fight against all oppression.

Unfortunately, we realize that our government trains military recruiters to use deception as a means to maintain America's wars. For instance, military recruiters downplay the probability that new recruits will serve in combat. Furthermore, recruiters over-emphasize college money, job training, and other veterans' benefits to gloss over every service member's primary function: to fight and win America's wars. Recruiters conveniently leave out details concerning combat service which may frighten potential recruits; instead, recruiters emphasize fun, travel, and adventure.

In the real world, veterans ages 20-24 are twice as likely as their peers to be unemployed. Only 5.6 percent of returning veterans use the college money available to them. On average, these funds only cover half the

cost of public university tuition or one-fifth the cost at a private college. Seventy-five percent of African Americans and 67 percent of Latinos experience racism while serving. Twenty-eight percent of women report being raped while in the service, and many rapes go completely unreported. Only 12 percent of males and 6 percent of females make use of skills they learn in the military. Finally, U.S. war veterans are twice as likely to kill themselves as ordinary civilians.

SDS and IVAW want all U.S. troops out of Iraq NOW! We realize the futility and criminality of this ongoing occupation and we see the correlation between high-levels of violence and U.S. presence in Iraq. SDS member and participant in Tuesday's action, Angela Denio said, "This war is a complete injustice perpetrated against the people of Iraq. The anti-war movement must rise in solidarity with the Iraqi people and their just struggle for national liberation." From this point forward, whenever any military recruiter sets foot on UNCA campus, SDS and IVAW-Asheville commit to countering their efforts by building a community movement that resists and disrupts war and militarism.

Students educate themselves at

Rutgers Iraq War Teach-In

by Timothy Horras, Tent State University/SDS – Rutgers – New Brunswick, NJ

When Tent State University/Students for a Democratic Society held a Teach-In on the Iraq war, we attempted to make the form of the event correspond to our core principles. Most anti-war events on the Rutgers campus have followed a consistent pattern: organizers would pick and invite an "expert" on some aspect of Iraq, then raise the requisite amount of money the speaker demanded. The speaker would come to campus, lecture the students, often be feted on the organizers' tab, and then with a hearty thanks would be on his or her merry way.

At some point, organizers with Tent State/SDS became aware that this arrangement was in apparent contradiction to our egalitarian and democratic principles. We sat down together and thought of how we could make our event more participatory, democratic, and populist, and we arrived at a few innovative ideas.

The first element with which we sought to infuse revolutionary democracy into the Teach-In was through the use of surveys. The surveys asked students to prioritize what they most wanted to know about the conflict in Iraq by asking open-ended questions. Students' answers were then to be compiled and used as a guide to prioritize the research and the presentation to be done.

The use of the questionnaires was a highly successful way of engaging with students. Using the survey went hand-in-hand with our motto of "organize everywhere," which we took seriously, surveying students wherever we could find them: in the dorms, in the lecture halls, in the cafeteria, in the lounge – anywhere organizers could reach their classmates.

The questionnaires functioned as a useful organizing tool all of the following ways: 1)

it gave organizers an excuse to engage students in a conversation about the war, 2) it allowed them to discuss the war in a very non-threatening, non-confrontational manner, 3) it created a perception of Tent State/SDS organizers as friendly, approachable, and actually concerned with the students' opinions, and 4) it put to lie once and for all the hoary canard, a mantra of bad activists everywhere, that young people are apathetic.

Once we had figured out the questions students had, we had to go about figuring out the answers. When we started the school year and began organizing for the Teach-In, we realized that our team was made up of less than half a dozen activists without any experience organizing whatsoever.

In this situation it would have been much easier for us to raise some money, invite a guest lecturer and focus on agitating for the event. But while collective research and participatory planning made our event in line with our democratic principles, refusing to have outside speakers and focusing on the Teach-In being student-researched and student-led made the event radically populist.

The route we had decided to

pursue meant that in addition to raising money to book a cool space (we chose to take over our university's chapel, a beautiful nineteenth century building on campus) and agitating for the event, we would also be spending a lot of time surveying and talking with students, compiling their responses, researching about the occupation, and synthesizing our findings into a flashy, gripping presentation, then practicing it and delivering it to our peers.

But all our hard work paid off. Over a 100 people attended the Rutgers Iraq War Teach-In. We succeeded in gaining significant media attention (campus, local, and regional), educating ourselves and empowering our fellow students. Half a dozen new organizers were recruited from the event, and soon got to work on the Anti-war Walkout as well as the many other campaigns we're running. Students were attracted to a message of mass empowerment through the practice of democracy, without relying on the use of outside authorities, which we hold to be the greatest lesson of the 2007 Rutgers Iraq War Teach-In.

Visit the Pirate Caucus blog at piratecaucus.blogspot.com for the extended article



photo by Isis Imagery: <http://isisimagery.com>

We say "Funk Dat" DC SDS marches on recruiters

Iraq Moratorium:

Funk the War! Drop Beats not Bombs!

by Rassah Ostadhossaini, W.T. Woodson High School, DC SDS, Elizabeth Sanders, American University/DC SDS

The energy was high as DC SDSers and friends rendezvoused at Dupont Circle in preparation for dancing in the streets in protest of the Iraq war. The sun was starting to go down, but the music was being turned up as about 50 youth danced their way into the streets to tell war profiteers that the youth of the United States are done dying in a stupid war.

The first stop on the dancing route was a nearby Army recruitment center. The lovely police escorts provided some nice disco-esque lighting and we danced until we grew tired of the recruiters staring at us through the windows.

We continued our leafleting and booty shaking around the city until we reached the DC office of Lockheed-Martin. This time around, we gained some more passer-bys who also wanted to "Drop Bomb Ass Beats, Not Beat Ass Bombs." After a boot-out from the lobby, we overtook the entrance and soon after the street, adding to our ranks the building's security guard who, in the middle of

writing up the incident report, threw her pad of paper to the ground and began dancing with us!

We danced to everything from Toots and the Maytals to the Buzzcocks to Defiance Ohio. With the help of a wonderful mobile sound system and tons of flyering and the amazing highschoolers of DC-SDS who organized the whole action, we were able to both have fun and get our message across.

Once we left Lockheed-Martin and returned to the street, showing both traffic and the police we were a force not to be reckoned with, we headed back to Dupont Circle where we triumphantly and musically ended our party, and Funked the war.

Religion



We spend a lot of time in SDS talking about internal dynamics of oppression, but in doing this important work we often think only about the big ISMS and not about other ways in which people are discouraged from participating in SDS. This article is an attempt by five members to share our experiences in SDS and activist circles as folks of faith. These personal stories are intended to begin a much longer dialogue about radicalism, faith, and SDS. Although our stories focus largely on the internal workings of SDS, there remains much to be said about how we interact with community members and organizations which base their lives and work in faith traditions.

Anson Biller

NYU

I am a pragmatist Zen Buddhist. That my religious practice affirms my activism, I believe, doesn't address my concern and is irrelevant. We, as SDS, have come together to create a participatory democracy whose citizens value equality, understanding, and mutual respect. Our success depends on our ability to reflect on whether our actions are in line with our values.

At this past national convention, a group of us were discussing the need to develop an effective national structure. Someone laughed, chipping in with, "And as soon as we have one, we'll overthrow the government and topple religion." No one spoke up, and I sat, silent for the rest of the night.

If we desire a victory that's more than a momentary yawn on history's expanse, we need to escape revolutionary movements' tendency to overlook and leave unchallenged its prejudices, to avoid in turn becoming an oppressor. The SDS members of faith with whom I've spoken are just as dedicated to ending oppression perpetrated in name of religion. In exploring our faiths we have re-imagined religion, and, so long as our practices do not conflict with SDS' points of unity, I would hope that you will stand beside us in solidarity.

Becca Rast

Lancaster

During my experience organizing with SDS, and with the Lancaster Coalition for Peace and Justice, I have constantly been aware of the importance of religion within my organizing experience. I began political activism because of my experience in the Mennonite Church I grew up in. In church we learned of political injustices and truths behind war that were never revealed to me in other aspects of my life. When I moved on from just educating myself, to helping educate others, I realized that the peace church community present in Lancaster was the first place I should look for support, especially when doing anti-war organizing. The support I sought was received. Every time I approach someone from my church or from other churches I get immediate support and affirmation for the work I am doing. Although the church may be inherently oppressive and unjust in many senses, it is inaccurate to just say "Fuck the Church" or "Fuck religion" because there are many people within the church who believe and live out the aspirations of many leftist organizers. Historically churches and religious organizations have been important in bringing successful mass political change into existence.

jasper conner

George Mason

The other day a solidarity action in DC began and ended with prayer. It was extremely difficult for me to close my eyes and bow my head without feeling humiliated in front of my fellow SDSers; not because of their actions in particular, but because the current climate in SDS is one that isn't particularly welcoming to religious expression. The problem isn't necessarily about individuals who disrespectfully quote antiquated leftist views on religion. The problem is that even most people who aren't disrespectful, still aren't respectful. I often feel like I'm tolerated or accepted as a religious person, but never really embraced as a radical christian.

Like other folks, I was radicalized because my religious values taught me that society should be organized in a way that allows everyone to treat each other with love. I realize that this isn't the experience of every religious person, but it is the experience of people all over the world who mobilize for justice guided by their religious values. If we want to build a mass movement for participatory democracy and collective liberation, then our organization needs to be inclusive of folks of faith.

Lindsay Hagerman

Boston

Jesus is one of my biggest political influences, and I'm an anti-imperialist radical queer. Alongside activists like Angela Davis, Howard Zinn, and Kate Bornstein, liberation theologians have shaped my political development. My faith is not about "pie in the sky." I believe Jesus provided a revolutionary guide for social justice here and now.

Being honest about my faith among activists somewhat mirrors my coming out process. I'm received with combinations of confusion, tolerance, and resentment. I mourn when Christians spread racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia – and I mourn when my comrades reinforce a common and mistaken association between devout Christianity and conservative, capitalist politics. If organizers refuse to fall into the trap of distancing themselves from people of faith, including Christians, SDS will open itself up to a larger potential membership, as well as strategic alliances for campaigns.

Raychel Haut

Queens

I don't think I would be a radical if it weren't for religion. Growing up as a religious Jew definitely has its drawbacks, but I was also raised with the belief in Judaism's social justice mandate. It's complex: Zionism constantly makes me question what it means to be a Jew. But my faith in G-d always gives me the courage to fight for the oppressed.

I've never asked anyone to agree with my beliefs, I just wish I didn't find myself defending them so often. Despite our differences, we've come together under SDS' vision to work for change in our society. But we need to redefine what this diversity entails; because some SDSers find it acceptable to tell me I "can't truly be part of the movement until (I) abandon the ignorant assumption that G-d exists."

As our movement works to be a force in the transformation of society, our faith can be transformative as well. Whether your faith lies with Marxism, Anarchy, or Judaism, we all have the power to redefine what religion and faith mean in our movement. Religion is not just a tool of elite fundamentalists: my faith is radical, and it is the foundation of everything I do.

Demystifying leadership **in SDS**

Nicole Davis, DC SDS, American University SDS

Many SDSers have heard words such as “informal leadership” or “SDS elite” thrown around. But there’s been little discussion about what that means or how it affects the dynamic of our organization. Addressing the issue, there were two national conference calls in January to talk about how leadership has been functions in SDS and what we would like to see happen from here.

The discussions included a variety of voices, ranging from those critical of current leadership to informal leaders themselves. In addition to assuming all voices had the best of intentions, another important thing I took away from these conversations was to reconceive “leadership” as something positive, contrasting the current trend in SDS to make leadership a “dirty word” and vilify those who take on such work.

Even after accepting the necessity of leadership, I was left wondering...But where does leadership fit into a non-hierarchal organization such as SDS? And how can we make leadership truly democratic, visible, and accessible to all members?

Much of leadership in SDS is centralized in the NE, thus making it harder for people in other regions to find out what work needs to get done. The

inaccessibility of leadership is also perpetuated because the current system for leadership development relies on current “leaders” to “recruit” other members they see having “potential”. While it is important for those with experience to encourage others, this cannot be the only method of leadership development. When this “recruitment” method is used alone, it becomes exclusive, leaving many valuable people out of the loop. It also contributes to invisibility, which is one of the biggest obstacles to democratizing leadership.

While we are a non-hierarchal organization that denounces official leadership, inevitably there is work that needs doing and we need people to take the initiative. This leaves us with the precarious predicament of informal leadership, which more easily lends itself to invisibility.

Since we do not have a formalized structure, we must find a way to make the national work that is being done visible. In addition to making leadership work visible, it's important that it be made "user-friendly", where any and all SDSers can feel encouraged and supported in doing national work. With some tweaking of our current informal leadership structure, work could be more evenly distributed among more people, empowering those who may feel excluded from leadership while also helping those currently doing tons of work avoid the dreaded "activist burnout".

Some positive suggestions from these discussions included publicly posting descriptions of leadership roles and forming a working group that would make national work more visible. One of the easiest ways we can ensure that leadership work will be more accessible and democratic is continuing these conversations locally and nationally, and further challenging ourselves to best reflect the world we wish to create.

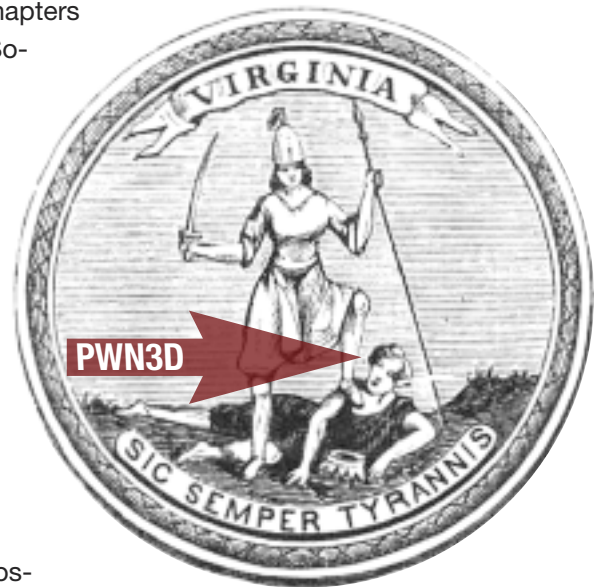
"Thus Always to Tyrants"

VA Convergence

by Claire Schoen and Hermelinda Cortes, VCU SDS

The convergence of Virginia Chapters of Students for a Democratic Society, on the first weekend of February in Richmond, Va., at Virginia Commonwealth University, successfully built the Virginia SDS network and ended with plans, techniques, and the formation of working groups to solidify means by which they will strengthen individual chapters and the ties among them.

Through workshops and friendly, casual conversation (fostered by a concerted effort made by all to be inclusive and share ideas), skills and ideas were shared abundantly. The workshop topics included how to harness media and use it to SDS' advantage, keys to effective organization (and plenty of history!), collective liberation from the mouth of a former female black panther, and consent and its practice to open our communities to better communication as part of our everyday interactions whether they be sexual or platonic.



In addition to workshops, a plenary for statewide actions and campaigns was held. We endorsed the March 20 call to action, the rally and march organized by the Virginia Immigrant People's Coalition, and the campaign to fight the proposed coal-fired power plant in Wise County, Virginia. We also endorsed two long-term campaigns to continue fighting for living wages

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Reportback

Midwest Convention

Nick Hillster, MAC-SDS

The weekend of January 12-13 in Milwaukee proved to us that others in the region were doing serious work on local and national issues, more than meeting the challenge of the high bar set by the so-called face of SDS, the better publicized chapters on the coasts.

Unlike national, our convention was non-deliberative, thus the work done was skill sharing, reports of chapter-level work, communication building, and caucusing.

Friday

On Friday afternoon we drove through Wisconsin to Milwaukee. We were put up by the amazing Jay and Molly of Milwaukee-SDS.

We started sharing about our chapters right away, went out to a busy, greasy pizza joint, then hit the hay in preparation of the next day's events.

Saturday Morning

Chapters attending were from Milwaukee, Chicago, Macalester, U of Minnesota, U of North Dakota at Grand Forks, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Madison and Detroit.

After intros we had an extended discussion, facilitated by Bill Ayers of old SDS and Weather Underground fame, who gave his great progressive smarts and spirit to the conversation.

Saturday Afternoon

After lunch we began chapter report backs. Oth-

ers were impressed with our strike, especially the structure of the mass meeting and our street takeover, as well as our new tradition of effigy-burning. Grand Rapids chapter told of their march to their congressperson's house despite the police presence in a publicized action that put pressure on this politician. What was apparent, however, was that even the smallest groups have had inspiring successes and actions.

After chapter reports, we had an activity and discussion on gender facilitated by Sicily of Detroit SDS. Sicily introduced to us the "knitting" analogy for anti-oppression work. Like knitters, who must practice their craft until the day they die or begin to lose it, people practicing anti-oppression work are involved in a constant process and are never free of oppressive tendencies.

Sunday Morning

Sunday morning was caucus/auxiliary time; the pairs were women/men, people of color/white, and working class/class privilege.

These conversations gave the convention a space to discuss oppression broadly. We gave ideas to include this kind of work at the chapter level.

Macalester SDS' "vibe-check" go-around at the end of every meeting proved a popular suggestion. Out of these talks, a strong message we meditated on was the concept that, "You know that you need the movement when the movement doesn't need you." This means that you're speaking when you need to speak, not dominating leadership roles, but sharing them with all group members and doing invisible roles as well.

Sunday Afternoon

We ended the convention with a series of break-out groups to discuss topics that had been brought up over the course of the weekend as requiring the attention of Midwest chapters. These included:

- Midwest chapter communication,
- March 20 protests
- RNC protests,
- Counter-recruitment,
- Non-hierarchical leadership.

The convention proved SDS can work as an organization of chapters in federation: in solidarity with one another, our problems and successes vary widely.

"VA Convergence" cont'd

across the state as well as countering student debt and tuition hikes. Following our endorsement of these campaigns and actions, working groups were formed to address internal education among chapters, growth in Virginia, collective liberation, and communication means.

The proposal for growth in Virginia included contacting the national welcoming committee to plug into the work that's already been done and to aide that committee by creating a statewide working group responsible for welcoming new Virginia chapters and building older Virginia chapters. This working group will be funded by Virginia SDS with 75 percent of the spillover funds raised for the Virginia SDS convergence and fundraising events occurring once per semester by chapters who have the resources to do so.

The collective liberation working group's proposal included plugging into national caucuses as well as establishing an anonymous system designed to receive concerns about hierarchical dynamics and oppression within chapters. The system will consist of a permanent but fluctuating network of working groups to mediate issues that may arise in Virginia chapters.

Lastly, the communications working group was established to build an in-

teractive website with an accessible list of contacts for chapters and working groups, resources for workshops and trainings, as well as a database of audio and visual media.

We successfully used the Virginia SDS Convergence as a tool to establish a strong network of chapters and individuals who are continually working on building personal relationships and a strong community. In order to continue supporting each other in our struggles we are tentatively planning for another statewide convergence this summer. We are excited about the potential of our new network and we are looking forward to breaking ground on all of the hard work that has already been done across the state.

Reportback

Southeast Convention

by Chapin Gray, Tuscaloosa SDS, and Michael Graham, University of North Carolina-Asheville SDS

Amid freezing temperatures and snow (almost unheard of in Tuscaloosa), the third Southeast SDS convention was held on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day weekend in Tuscaloosa, AL, home of a one-and-a-half year old chapter of SDS. The weekend drew students from Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and Alabama.

About 70 SDSers packed the morning plenary, and engaged in productive discussion that produced several unanimous decisions – such as to begin holding monthly regional phone conferences, and to work together on a regional counter-recruitment campaign.

That opening plenary set the tone for the rest of the weekend – cooperation and practical unity. The majority of the convention was devoted to dialogue relevant to our local organizing, though there was also plenty of discussion about working on regional and national levels, such as workshops on informal leadership, SDS' presence at the RNC, and the Days of Action Against the War. Other workshops focused on sustainable living, queer politics, the Iraq Resistance and the anti-war movement, oppression and privilege, and coalition building, just to name a few.

Throughout the weekend, convention participants managed to both accomplish our goals and produce concrete ways to help our organizing and build SDS and have a good time in the process. Along with plenaries, workshops, and caucuses

(one of the weak points of the convention; their role in SDS and at the conference was not well-defined for many), the convention-goers traveled to Birmingham to hear Rev. Lennox Yearwood (founder of the Hip-Hop Caucus) speak, explored the small southern town of Tuscaloosa, and spent time getting to know one another better.

Proposals passed include an endorsement of the Days of Action Against the War (the SDS-led protests planned for the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war), to support Iraq Veterans Against the War and participate in counter-recruitment actions, and to support the United Electrical Workers Local 150, a labor union in Raleigh, N.C., in their struggles for collective bargaining.

Many expressed later that they left the convention with a better understanding of the hard work the Southeast has done the past year. Doug Michel from UNCA-SDS said, "Hearing updates from the various chapters here, you see that the Southeast is incredibly active and is winning many struggles, both on their campuses and in their communities."



photo by Joel Cook (found via Creative Commons)

Stealing **Your** **Rights**

Ramiz Andoni, George Mason University SDS

Thousands of teens sitting in a street
Singing words like love, live, peace
Holding signs, no violence at all
Just exercising the right to assemble with
peers

Men in black arrive, ready to attack
Holding shields and bullets, plus tear gas
They start firing at the peaceful protesters
Causing damage physical and mental

Bloody streets, black and blue bodies
Coughing, more coughing, lungs on fire
Cops still busting heads with clubs
Cops still shooting rubber out of guns

So in conclusion, protesters were calm
Until the cops came, with insanity and chaos

Connect with **sds**

WEBSITES

Students for a Democratic Society
<http://newsds.org>

SDS Wiki
<http://newsds.org/wiki>

SDS on Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2205055297>

SDS News Bulletin Blog
sdsnewsbulletin.wordpress.com/

REGIONAL LIST-SERVS

Midwest SDS
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/midwestsds>
midwestsds
@lists.riseup.net

Northeast SDS
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/northeastdsds>
northeastdsds
@lists.riseup.net

Northwest SDS
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/nwsds>
nwsds@lists.riseup.net

Southeast SDS
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/southernldsds>
southernldsds
@lists.riseup.net

Southwest SDS
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/southwestsds>
southwestsds
@lists.riseup.net

Virginia SDS
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/virginiadsds>
virginiadsds
@lists.riseup.net

West Coast SDS
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/westcoastsds>
westcoastsds
@lists.riseup.net

CAUCUS & PRIVILEGE DISCUSSION GROUPS

Hetero Allies
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/sdsqueerallies>
nesdsqueerallies
@lists.riseup.net

High School Caucus
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/highschoolsds>

[/info/highschoolsds](https://lists.riseup.net/info/highschoolsds)
highschoolsds
@lists.riseup.net

Men's Auxiliary
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/sdsmensaux>
sdsmensaux
@lists.riseup.net

People of Color Caucus
<http://groups.google.com/group/SDSNPOCC>
SDSNPOCC
@googlegroups.com

Queer Caucus
<http://groups.google.com/group/sdsqueercaucus>
sdsqueercaucus
@googlegroups.com

Trans/Genderqueer Caucus
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/sdsgenderqueerscaucus>
sdsgenderqueerscaucus
@lists.riseup.net

White Privilege Working Group
<http://groups.google.com/group/natldswhiteprivwg>
natldswhiteprivwg
@googlegroups.com

Women's Caucus
<http://groups.google.com/group/national-sds-womens-caucus>
national-sds-womens-caucus
@googlegroups.com

Working Class Caucus
<http://groups.google.com/group/sds-national-working-class-caucus>
sds-national-working-class-caucus
@googlegroups.com

CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIONS

Northeast Student-Debt Campaign
<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/nesds-studentdebtwg>
nesds-studentdebtwg
@lists.riseup.net

March 20th Actions
<http://groups.google.com/group/3202008/>
3202008
@googlegroups.com

RNC/DNC Actions
<http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/sdsprotestnc2008>
sdsprotestnc2008
@lists.riseup.net

NAT'L WORKING GROUPS:

News Bulletin

<http://groups.google.com/group/sds-news-bulletin>
sds-news-bulletin
@googlegroups.com

Chapter Census

<http://groups.google.com/group/sds-chapter-census>
sds-chapter-census
@googlegroups.com

Fundraising

<http://groups.google.com/group/sds-fundraising>
sds-fundraising
@googlegroups.com

Media

<http://groups.google.com/group/national-sds-media>
national-sds-media
@googlegroups.com

Outreach and Alliance-Building

<http://groups.google.com/group/sds-alliance-outreach>
sds-alliance-outreach
@googlegroups.com

Ratification Committee

<http://groups.google.com/group/sds-ratification>
sds-ratification
@googlegroups.com

Calendar

MARCH

1-9

Mountain Justice Spring Break (Virginia)

mjsb.org
What: Come face to face with the devastating effects of mountain top removal and coal industry abuse – and learn the skills and knowledge you need to fight back! Through education, community service, speakers, hiking, music, poetry, direct action and more, you will join local communities in the struggle to maintain their land and culture.

8-9

National Conference on Organized Resistance

American University
Washington, DC
ncor2008.org

14-16

Left Forum

Cooper Union,
New York City
leftforum.org

13-16

Winter Soldier

Washington, DC
ivaw.org/wintersoldier
What: Winter Soldier will feature testimony from US veterans who served in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, giving an accurate account of what is really happening day in and day out, on the ground.

17-21

Student Days of Action Against the Iraq war

See the announcement on page 8

19th

Fifth Anniversary of the Iraq War

Washington, DC
(DC specific actions)
5yearstoomany.org
dcsds@riseup.net

22-30

Mountain Justice Spring Break (Ohio)

See Mountain Justice (Virginia)

APRIL

4-6

SDS Northwest Regional Convention

Reed College
Portland, OR

Registration & Workshop Proposals:
leah.savitsky@reed.edu

11-13

SDS Northeast Regional Convention

Boston, MA

Working group:
<http://groups.google.com/group/sds-northeast-regional-convention>

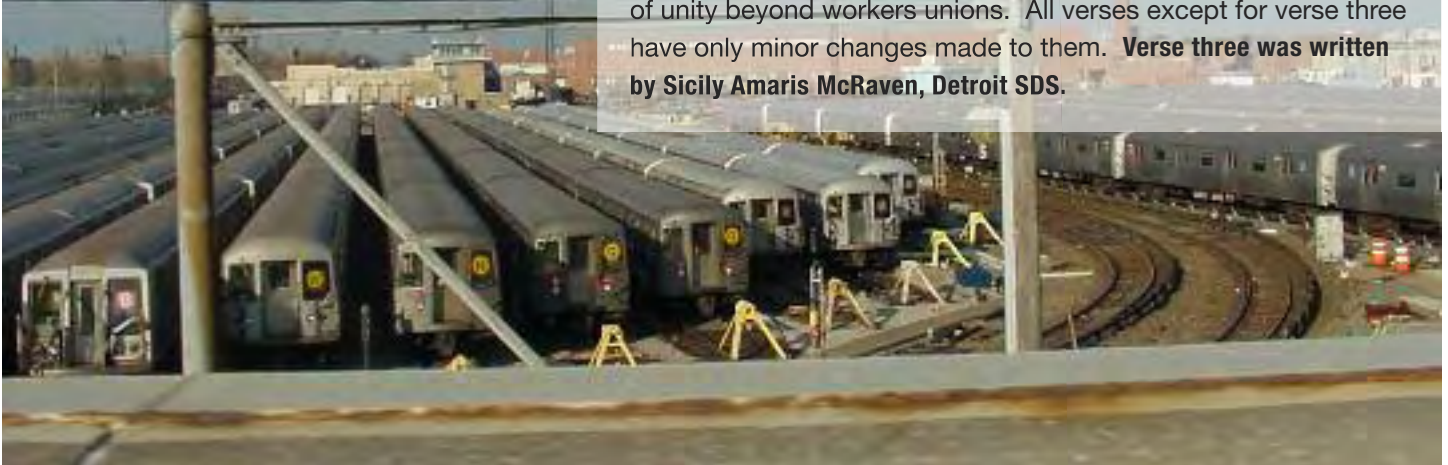
Contacts:
Lindsay Hagerman
maydayhagerman@gmail.com

Emma Gordon
lastseptember@gmail.com

Solidarity Forever

[Ed note: Originally sung to the tune of "John Brown's Body" / "John Brown's Baby." Increased tempo, rapping, and freestyling new verses highly encouraged.]

Note on Authorship: "Solidarity Forever" is a union song written some time ago by Ralph Chaplin. New verses were added by Steve Suffet. The song below was changed to expand the theme of unity beyond workers unions. All verses except for verse three have only minor changes made to them. **Verse three was written by Sicily Amaris McRaven, Detroit SDS.**



Not a single wheel can turn: The NYC Transit Strike of 2005. Photo by anonymous benefactor

When the movement's inspiration
 through the peoples' blood shall run
There can be no power greater
 anywhere beneath the sun
Yet what force on earth is greater than
 the feeble strength of one
But united we are strong

(Chorus)
Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
For united we are strong

What ought we hold in common with
 the greedy parasite
Who would reawaken feud'lism and
 crush us with it's might
Is there anything left for us to do but
 organize and fight?
For united we are strong

In this world we come from prairies,
 live in cities where they trade
Live in ghettos, sub-divided
 by the miles of highway laid
Now we stand out cast and starving all
 outsourced and underpaid
But united we are strong

They divide us by our color,
 they divide us by our tongue
They divide us men and women,
 they divide us old and young
But they'll tremble at our voices
 when they hear these verses sung
For united we are strong

They have taken untold millions that
 they never worked to earn
But without our brain and muscle
 not a single wheel can turn
We can break their haughty power,
 gain our freedom when we learn
That united we are strong

In our hands is placed a power
 greater than their hoarded gold
Greater than the might of armies
 magnified a thousand fold
We can bring to birth a new world
 from the ashes of the old
For united we are strong

*Send your songs to the Olive Green Song Book,
which is dedicated to songs written by activists.
olivegreensongbook@gmail.com*