

# THE SOCIALIST

**LOOKING BACK**  
*TO MOVE FORWARD*

**NEXT STOP:**  
**SOCIAL REVOLUTION**

**BEYOND NOVEMBER**

**“OUR REVOLUTION”**  
IS NOT REVOLUTIONARY

**Still the Political**  
**Project Calls Us**



**"RISE, DRAGONS."**

— Angela Nicole Walker



# the SOCIALIST

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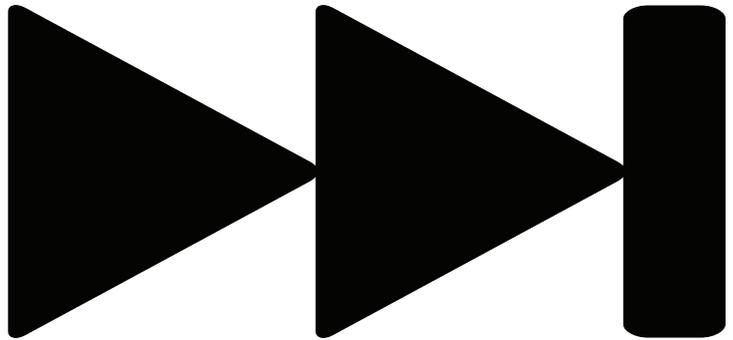
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## STILL THE POLITICAL PROJECT CALLS TO US

MATEO PIMENTEL

# LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD



By Mimi Soltysik

As a campaign, we've learned a lot over this last year. Ultimately, we should be able to look back with an eye toward analyzing our victories and our mistakes and preparing to build on the strengths while making adjustments to approaches that fell short. I mean, this is about progress, right? Why run a campaign if it's not going to make a positive contribution to the revolutionary movement? So let's take a peek at some key areas of the Soltysik/Walker 2016 campaign to see how it might provide some insight into future approaches to radical electoral campaigns and organizing in general.

## **RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS!**

I think we can acknowledge that many folks in the U.S. have fears about involvement with radical/revolutionary politics. How do we help them overcome those fears? We can start by listening — not listening to speak. By genuinely listening and processing what folks tell us, we gain a better understanding of the experiences that shape their perspectives. By approaching people with love and care as sisters and brothers, the likelihood that we can establish bonds increases significantly. Also, many are intimidated by interaction with the Left for a variety of reasons. We don't have to validate those reasons. We are real people — people who laugh, smile, and cry. Be prepared to exchange expressions of humanity.

## **MAKE NO ASSUMPTIONS**

Everyone is in a unique position with regard to political development. Rather than a blanket approach to organizing, take the time to acknowledge and engage on an individual basis. In doing so, we find out critical information that helps our progress. For example, the Soltysik/Walker 2016 campaign used a crowdsourcing site to raise funds. Early on, we learned that folks had real concerns about offering personal information to an explicitly radical effort. In particular, many feared government surveillance. How did we find this out? We asked. And in asking, we were able to engage in a productive dialogue about surveillance and oppression. Frequently, that kind of dialogue went a long way toward easing fears.

## **LOOKING CLOSELY AT CAPACITY**

What looks on paper to be a potentially strong organizing capacity can be highly misleading. If a relatively large number of people aren't focused or engaged, the chances of follow-through on a project can be rather slim. Conversely, a very small number of dedicated and focused individuals who clearly understand a vision can knock you on your ass with their ability to organize around a goal. Once again, make no assumptions. Surveying capacity on the front end of a project can go a

long way toward understanding strengths and weaknesses.

## **DROP THE SECTARIAN BULLSHIT**

Wonderful folks may belong to organizations with a history of manipulative and/or deceptive behavior. Blanket condemnations of everyone belonging to an organization turns off potential comrades. Yes, there are some who preach “left unity” but mean “left unity as long as me or my organization leads the project.” They don’t speak for everyone. By approaching potential allies with a smile and a handshake, and demonstrating a clear commitment to cooperation, we make a genuine contribution toward true left unity. We have wonderful contributions to offer as an organization. Those contributions are lost when we begin building lists of folks who find our behavior objectionable. A Left in need of growth doesn’t need that shit.

## **THAT “STRATEGIC PLANNING” THING**

This might sound dry and boring, but this piece is critical to success. Taking the time on the front end of a campaign to dig in to strategic planning is invaluable. If you don’t know how to work on a strategic plan, ask a comrade to help direct you to someone who can assist.

## **THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Limited financial resources may necessitate a close look at cheap or free resources. For example, many folks were extraordinarily generous in offering financial contributions to the Soltysik/Walker 2016 campaign; as a result, we were able to reach quite a few areas throughout the country. However, there was simply no way financially to meet everyone in-person who was either interested in or supportive of the campaign. How did we address this? We hosted bi-weekly video town halls where those with webcams and/or phones could engage Angela and me and each other in discussion. We made consistent use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to message, to share ideas, to ask questions, to facilitate discussion. The pros and cons of social media are another discussion. Used strategically, it can be an incredible organizing tool.

## **CONSISTENCY AND A LITTLE DISCIPLINE**

Our credibility relies on our ability to follow through when we publicly state that we’re going to do *x*, *y*, and *z*. Can the people rely on us to make good on our word? Can we maintain a schedule? Do we have the structures in place to ensure that comrades will be able to step up to fill in when others are simply tired or burnt out? So much of our potential progress relies on our ability to answer “yes” to each of these questions.

Make no mistake: none of this is easy. We are overworked, we are often tired, we know we face profound challenges, and these realities can, at times, make us feel a sense of nihilism. That’s understandable. If we’re realistic about where we stand at any given moment, and we are prepared to make strategic use of our capacity, while also offering much-needed support, compassion, and encouragement, the daunting and seemingly insurmountable challenges become significantly more approachable. The fact is we can guarantee that, barring socialist revolution, capitalism will continue to kill millions, and billions will continue to suffer mightily. We are here for a reason: to win.

# NEXT STOP: SOCIAL REVOLUTION

By Sachio Ko-Yin

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By the time you see this, you'll experience what I have not: A Clinton or Trump White House. But on this end of time, we're still in the horse race of capitalist elections.

However the election turns, the day after the election is when we rededicate ourselves to the seemingly impossible: lifting the veil of socioeconomic corruption and reproduction. The very tools of human rights, that is education, health and deliberation, are major vehicles by which class reproduces itself and maintains its hierarchy. Our task is to challenge this. It's all a tall order. Whether we're democratic socialists or anarchists, we're working for radical democracy and true socialism. These two imperatives we've never seen in history, but we insist will be our future.

During this election cycle, the unfolding debate's foibles and polls fill us with dread of who will win. Clinton, an archetypal social liberal and militarist, is a Wall Street machine politician who seems reasonable, at least when compared to conservatives. By contrast, a Trump presidency would shoot capitalism in the foot. It would be destabilize markets, be a victory for xenophobia and misogyny, and, as with everything, it would be the working and poor who would suffer.

With all of our ideals of socialism and anarchism, we face the

perennial question: "How do we bring our ideals into reality? How do we go from here to there?"

Here are some thoughts, from an anarchist and radical nonviolence viewpoint, addressed especially to my cousins, the democratic socialists. As with all of us, I have no simple answers, only suggestions, seeking to learn from our history. Of course we know the devil is in the details, but these are the racing passions I feel when watching this horrid election.

After Election Day, the first step: We must recognize what a tiny fraction of the public we represent. (This is not to discourage us at all, but to start out clear about where we are.) Bourgeois democracy has a relatively stable political culture; the politically active public is divided between liberals and conservatives.

We feel the majority of working people would naturally want an economic system that doesn't use them as fodder for profits. Yet, we observe that even at the heights of Occupy the "Bernie Moment," what resonated with the public was not anti-capitalism, but reform and social democracy, band aids for business as usual. We remained marginalized from the conversation about the actual economic or infrastructure of democracy.

I propose after Election Day new movement cultures for organizers and theorists. We've made some progress in addressing social oppressions, but this needs to be in the very roots of our radical movement. We need to develop an intersectional understanding of power as inseparable from the class struggle. We need to recognize both the Caucasian and gender bubbles. We need to understand how quickly activists organize in their own given networks, then reproduce in coalitions the social oppressions they claim to be against.

Organizers and theorists need new ways to communicate with everyday people, with fellow workers. Anarchists like me will be working for the stateless and classless future. In these opening steps, what is needed is not isolation from the wider socialist movement, but coalition; and constructive internal debate to clarify our understandings and to prepare us, above all, to debate with liberals and conservatives — present ourselves in spaces of public discourse, wherever they open, and not only to self-selecting radical subculture.

We need a continuum of the left. Left social democrats, democratic socialists, anarchists, anti-authoritarian Marxists — all of us — can debate, as cousins, in a left culture that's process oriented, non-sectarian, welcoming to newcomers. Our culture needs to be transparent, and earn the trust of the



## NEXT STOP: REVOLUTION CONTINUED

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community. Even if they feel we're too idealistic, we want our work to win respect.

Organizers and theorists should be two sides of a whole. As organizers, articulating positive alternatives, we have to resist closed radical subculture, with its internally trending jargon and recognizable lifestyles. Again, we should be able to explain our vision to co-workers, blue collar and pink collar, and to our families. If we can't do this, we're doomed to be irrelevant to the blue- and pink-collar general public.

In our first steps at a movement culture, for economic democracy and civil freedoms, I can't say strongly enough: Leninism must go. Any ideology that would exclude workers from their own movement, or justify party dictatorship, or the making of unions into puppets of the state-employed class, we must part ways with, irrevocably.

Correspondingly, those of us who are theorists, working class intellectuals and formally schooled, can leave the rabbit holes of academic left subcultures, where hyper-intellectual texts end up being platforms for cultural capital. We can form research collectives and teach ourselves quantitative/qualitative research skills. Our analysis must translate to actual working people, geographically in a space and place, not vague outdated abstractions with post

modern overlays — we need as theorists to be able to hold our own with conservatives and liberals in friendly debate, even as we take idealist positions, and not be esoteric or self referential. Accessibility is part and parcel of our theory culture.

As a new culture of theorists, in addition to an intersectional understanding of class politics, we need to double our efforts to bring the current mode of production into our vocabulary. We are anti-capitalists after the rise of the modern welfare state (which 19th-century socialists could not have imagined) and the race to financial and political globalization.

Our work should be to clarify the rise of the service sector, the offshoring of manufacturing, and niche mass marketing to our identities. We need to articulate the rise of big data, the "Age of Google" with all its labor implications, and the massive changes in advanced capitalism unfolding before us. It should be our primary work with organizers to make these industrial changes understandable, how they affect changes in class composition, and how this reverberates in global politics. Amazingly, the anti-democratic basis of class hierarchy from the first industrial revolution to the network society, remain fundamentally unchallenged. This is the work before us, to challenge and undo it.

And for all of us on the continuum of the democratic and anarchist left, we need to re-create, to re-envision, the International while learning from past mistakes. We should form a global counter-UN governed by workers' self-management and guided by an egalitarian culture. In each of our countries, we can revitalize and reform the labor movement as the nucleus of a future order in our various industries. We can reform our unions into universities of workers' self-management in production, and thus deliver the future global requisitioning of our industries into our hands. We can work for this recreation, using our work for human rights and needs to make our very unions the organs of future democracy.

All of this done, the future global transformation will be at the point of production, and then will surge to other facets of society in every country. Each section will transform our nations from within; in one all-encompassing general strike, into the International of civil and economic freedom. Call it anarchism. Call it socialism. Call it democracy. These are our goals, from this point to the future.

# BEYOND NOVEMBER

By Pat Noble

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Why do we engage in electoral action?

I have found myself thinking about that question a lot this year; not because I do not have an answer but because our actions on the Left are incredibly unreflective of that answer.

We do not run for office with the belief that our candidates stand an honest chance of being elected. With rigged election laws, closed debates, corporate funding, and an overall monopoly on power by the two capitalist parties, there should not be a realistic expectation that our candidates will be elected. I have to admit that part of me cringes when I hear a third party candidate introduced as “the next President of the United States” or something to that effect - partially because we have started out by lying to everyone in the room and partially because we have turned the credibility dial down a few notches while turning up the novelty dial. It is important to be honest on this point because we cannot expect to win people over if we are not being honest with ourselves.

We should not run for the sake of running.

There is a commonly expressed opinion that we should field as many candidates as possible, regardless of experience,



understanding of the politics they are running on, or ability to articulate those politics through an electoral campaign. The idea behind this is essentially a strength-in-numbers approach though in effect - this reasoning is based on quantity over quality.

Based on past experience, I think it is an abdication of responsibility to allow a voter to come into contact with a candidate who is supposed to serve as a representative of your party and its politics but is ill-informed on both. Thinking of the campaigns over the past few years that could be defined as successful, none of them were the result of running as many candidates as possible to see which ones would stick.

We do run to put forward radical politics that are not offered by the Democrat or Republican Parties, but even that is a derivative of the primary purpose. How beneficial are candidates with great politics but are unable or unwilling to communicate those politics to their community, instead choosing to remain isolated in Left circles? I think it's fair to say that our politics are only as good as how they are received by our fellow members of the working class. Socialism in the United States will remain on the sidelines without working class support, and putting forward candidates more comfortable with socialism remaining on the margins is not helpful or productive.

So why do we engage in electoral action? In my opinion, it can be summed up in a single word: Opposition.

As a socialist party and part of a larger movement, it is our intention to oppose capitalism, its parties, and the individuals who uphold it. Electoral politics

are one way to turn our good intentions into action and offer that challenge.

At its core, I believe electoral action offers us two opportunities. First, it delivers a brief moment in which representatives of capitalism can be held to account for their actions and the actions of their party through directly challenging their status as elected officials. Every bill passed and hardship brought to bear on working people can be directly challenged at a time when a larger number of people are listening. With issues I have already noted factored in, this is the part of the equation that the Left is better at.

Second, it offers a window through which we can present a credible alternative of how we could do it better. This is the difficult part because doing this in an effective way calls on us to “raise the bar” and run quality campaigns instead of token campaigns. By quality campaigns, I mean campaigns with serious candidates prepared to organize, clear politics to put forward, positive strategy on how to organize and conduct the campaign, and measurable goals on what we hope to accomplish. With due respect to candidates that have stood in the past, which is never an easy task, the vast majority of Left electoral campaigns have not met this standard.

We have outlived the circular time line of petitioning to get a candidate on the ballot, securing a minimal amount of votes, building nothing past Election Day, and starting over next year. I am not content to see that cycle continue and neither should anyone else interested in a stronger, more credible challenge to Democrat and Republican candidates from the Left.

Moving beyond 2016, I think we have to look critically on how our electoral campaigns have operated in the past. We have to envision new strategies and concepts on how we can use electoral action to put forward our radical ideas. We have to build new relationships on the Left and demand that they be based on principle and common interest, rather than self-interest and entryism. We have to be clear that what we are putting forward is socialism and that there isn't a more “palatable” term that should be used in its place. We have to run campaigns and put forward candidates that embody these desires for a more forward-thinking and cohesive Left opposition.

Surely our politics and the urgency of challenging capitalism in meaningful ways can propel us to do better.





## “OUR REVOLUTION” IS NOT REVOLUTIONARY

By Dan Arel

On August 24, Bernie Sanders officially launched his post-presidential bid project, Our Revolution. Hoping to build on his primary success, Our Revolution looks to endorse and financially support down-ticket Democratic candidates around the country. This is part of the vision Sanders laid out about reforming, or in his words “revolutionizing” the Democratic Party.

It offers an ambitious, and a somewhat respectable goal, to fight to push a center-right party to the left. However, as many have noted, Sanders himself, while being much further left than his Democratic counterparts, is not the bastion of leftist politics the media and many of his supporters think he is.

Secondly, what Sanders is selling as a revolution, is, in reality, nothing more than an attempt to reform a capitalist, centrist party. Our Revolution is cannot be revolutionary in this sense, as it is simply not possible to revolutionize a counter-revolutionary party. At the end of the day, Our Revolution is still supporting capitalist candidates who by and large support the Affordable Care Act over universal healthcare, or at least support slowly progressing the struggling health-care plan towards some version of socialized care, meanwhile courts around the country pick apart the plan, leaving it in shambles, and as further rises

in health insurance costs skyrocket, leaving what might be left of the affordable part of the plan on the cutting-room floor.

Candidates being endorsed by the new organization include the likes of Tulsi Gabbard, a United States Congresswoman from Hawaii who has criticized President Obama’s foreign policy as not being tough enough against the likes of ISIS. Her criticisms of his lack of military action have earned her critiques for being a right-wing hawk when it comes to fighting ISIS in the Middle East. The organization also threw its support behind a now-failed bid to oust Florida congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz by supporting the anti-Iran, vocally pro-Israel supporter, Tim Canova.

These are not revolutionary candidates, and they are hardly reform candidates. In reality, they are simply candidates who either vocally supported Sanders in the primary, or in the case of Canova, offered a challenge to Wasserman Schultz, someone Sanders knew was fighting to ensure he did not receive the Democratic presidential nomination.

While even those on the left can appreciate the election of further-left Democrats, as they do, to a degree, make the life of many Americans better,



*“OUR REVOLUTION” IS NOT REVOLUTIONARY CONTINUED*

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a greater understanding of the party tells us that even the most domestically left Democrats still generally fall into foreign-policy imperialism and American exceptionalism. Those being endorsed by Our Revolution do not break that mold.

Our Revolution is not revolutionary, and it should not be discussed as revolutionary. Revolutionary politics will only come from outside the two-party establishment and will likely not come by playing by the establishment rules. Even parties such as the Green Party are not bringing about revolutionary change as they seek to gain power through the already-established system, and offer no path to changing or overthrowing that system. They wish to reform our politics, not revolutionize them.

As socialists, our goal should be to educate the influx of young voters who are seemingly attracted to the socialist label, but only understand it in the context of Bernie Sanders. When speaking to a crowd at the University of Georgetown, Sanders proclaimed that his brand of socialism didn't involve workers owning the means of production.

If the mainstream understanding of socialism in the United States becomes offering partly socialized programs through the means of capitalism, the

goals of socialists around the country become a greater uphill battle than ever before. Socialists still find themselves explaining that socialism isn't aligned with Stalinism and the USSR, and now have to further explain that it doesn't support “fixing” capitalism.

While Sanders can be praised to some degree for removing a lot of the stigma around the “S” word, he has also done damage to what the word means by using the label for his liberal version of socialism.

Now in the context of a socialist revolution, Our Revolution further deepens that damage, telling the mainstream voters, especially young voters, that this is what revolution looks like. It does, however, leave the left with an opportunity to capitalize on the discussion happening in the mainstream, but it must be done quickly, loudly, and strategically to ensure that real revolutionary voices are heard and not drowned out by the sound of pseudo-revolutionaries talking about universal health care alongside their plan to strike ISIS with the strongest military the world has to offer.

# STILL THE POLITICAL PROJECT CALLS TO US

“Many people, it is true, never contemplate the possibility of total power; the very thought of it scares them.”

— Simone Weil, “On the Abolition of All Political Parties”

Not long ago, Obama openly leveled criticism against the political establishment in Cuba. He righteously decried a lack of democracy and political freedom, indicting the Cuban government for its role in continuing an antidemocratic politics for far too long after the Cold War has ended.

Now, however, in the wake of the turmoil surrounding the fixed Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Obama’s shameless denunciation of Cuba has lost whatever paltry significance it may have once had. Thanks to the despotic blemish that stains the Democratic Party in its march to the White House, the U.S. edges closer to consummate totalitarianism under Obama’s chosen successor, Hillary.

During his trip to Cuba, Obama pushed for reforms in political and economic spheres, speaking to Cubans about openness in a repressive state that limits internet access, controls the media, and smothers internal dissent. But because Obama is of the Democratic Party, there is no reason for him to ever publicly acknowledge the irony of the highly contrived, antidemocratic convention that his party so recently held in Philly. Never mind that he has traipsed around the world, hypocritically touting “democracy” in countries like Cuba.

Nay, there is little hope that Obama will

acknowledge just how ridiculous and disingenuous the Democrats have revealed themselves to be to American voters this election cycle. Indeed, the entire Democratic Party has made a fool of itself this summer. Election results this November should leave no room for doubt that fewer and fewer people are inclined to buy what either political party is selling.

And the public’s outrage is likewise targeted at the DNC’s attempts to coerce the public into voting Hillary — not because she is fit to be president, but “because Trump.” At least radicals in America can feel vindicated by reflecting on Raúl Castro’s reaction to Obama this past summer: “We must be alert, today more than ever. ... We are not naive, and we are aware of powerful external forces that aspire to, as they say, ‘empower’ non-state actors to generate agents of change and finish off the revolution by other means.”

Anti-imperialists and other radicals in the U.S. have always sympathized with such sentiments, and we have always recognized establishment efforts that divert domestic revolutionary currents. Certainly the millions of Americans hoping for a political revolution this year would do well to heed Castro’s suspicion of Obama and those of his ilk. Progressives should consider adding the entire DNC hierarchy to the list of untrustworthy suspects,

just as their radical counterparts did long ago. They might realize that there will be no revolution under a Hillary coronation, and thus they might cast their vote outside the two-party system — if not against it.

One problem remains. Although millions more have now come to view the Democratic Party as at least as corrupt as the Republican Party, many will fail to believe that Democrats brought the U.S. to brink of totalitarianism and pushed it over the edge. Moreover, such disbelief in the dangers that the Democrats actually pose is understandable. Where should the uncertain public look for the facts? CNN? The New York Times? These instruments of empire excel at selling shampoo and getting the public to support endless war, which is good for business. They will continue to lack all credibility so long as they exist to serve the capitalist interests of the state.

Those who continue to doubt the despotic dangers of the Democratic Party might consider evaluating the Party by Simone Weil's criteria of truth, justice, and public interest, which she wrote in 1943. They could start comparing the Democratic Party with Weil's three "essential characteristics" of any political party:

1. A political party is a machine to generate collective passions.
2. A political party is an organisation designed to exert collective pressure upon the minds of all its individual members.
3. The first objective and also the ultimate goal of any political party is its own growth, without limit.

After determining that the Democratic Party fits the bill in 2016, the skeptical public should consider what Weil says about political parties and the ethos of totalitarianism that marks them all: "Because of these three characteristics, every party is totalitarian — potentially, and by aspiration. If one party is not actually totalitarian, it is simply because those parties that surround it are no less so." Weil offers an incisive criticism of the DNC's autocratic trajectory in a comment about her third characteristic, the objective of unlimited growth: "It is a particular instance of the phenomenon which always occurs whenever thinking individuals are dominated by a collective structure — a reversal of the relation between ends and means."

Should those unconvinced of its harmfulness find what Weil says of all political parties to be true of the Democratic Party, they would also see that their doubts about the totalitarian tendencies of the Democratic Party are largely a deliberate consequence of the Party's actions. "Once the growth of the party becomes a criterion of goodness," says Weil, "it follows inevitably that the party will exert a collective pressure upon people's minds. This pressure is very real; it is openly displayed; it is professed and proclaimed. It should horrify us, but we are already too much accustomed to it."

Rather than bemoan the Democratic Party's repressive actions this year, skeptics following Weil's analysis will see that they have been influenced by the intense collective pressure. Hillary's competition currently does its best to get her elected. But if this effort alone is not enough, it will be the millions of Hillary supports, and their doubts about the tyranny of the Democratic Party, that put her in the White House.

"But the state lieth in all languages of good and evil; and whatever it saith it lieth; and whatever it hath it hath stolen."

— Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra"



## **SOCIALISTS DON'T LET OTHER SOCIALISTS DO SOCIALISM ALONE.**

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