



# BREAD & ROSE ACTIV

→ PORTLAND DSA NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 002 | WINTER 2019

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**BREAD & ROSE CITY** is published throughout the year by the Portland chapter of Democratic Socialists of America. Portland DSA can be reached at [info@portlanddsa.org](mailto:info@portlanddsa.org).

#### ABOUT THE CENTERFOLD

Portland DSA member Brian Campbell created the included print emphasizing solidarity in the Pacific Northwest. The raised fist enjoys a long history as a symbol of solidarity. Used in labor union propaganda in the early 1900s, by communists and anti-fascists to counter the open-palm salute favored by fascists and Nazis, and later by the Black Panther Party and #BlackLivesMatter, it represents unity, strength and the power of bringing people together to resist injustice and fight for a better world.

Content has been supplied by members of the Portland chapter of Democratic Socialists of America. If you'd like to contribute, please email [info@portlanddsa.org](mailto:info@portlanddsa.org). Want to join DSA, or do you need to renew your dues? Learn more at [portlanddsa.org/join](http://portlanddsa.org/join).

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Printed with union pride by Hollywood Impress.

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Additional illustration work courtesy of the DSA National Design Committee.

#### DEAR COMRADES,

If there were a theme to this edition of Portland DSA's newsletter, it would be solidarity. Solidarity for workers' rights. Solidarity for tenants' rights. Solidarity because the working class must band together if we're going to take down capitalism and build a world free of misogyny, oppression, poverty and racism.

In this issue of Bread & Roses, you'll hear how Portland DSA members are helping tenants to fight for better living conditions in the face of hostile, neglectful landlords, along with what might be the chapter's biggest and most important labor project ever: a socialist job fair and salting campaign. Workers are now actively organizing at Amazon from within at Portland-area locations.

You'll also learn how the chapter is fighting U.S. imperialism abroad through actions at home, rallying against a proposed fracked-gas terminal on the coast and raising class consciousness through political education. We hope these articles are interesting not only to Portland DSA members but to all Oregonians struggling with poor working conditions, rising rents, police violence, unaffordable health care and the destruction of our planet.

When we recognize how our bosses and landlords only value us for the profits we provide them, and how we're all connected by struggle, we can organize for a new world where we can all live healthy, fulfilling and dignified lives. We may not all be represented by unions where we live or where we work, but as socialists, we know that by standing with them, we're not only fighting for the rights of union members — we're fighting for a better life for all of us.

— Kara Hansen, co-editor of *Bread & Roses*, member of DSA's Amazon Workers Solidarity Committee

*Workers organizing at Amazon are suffering physically and financially and need your help! To donate to the hardship fund, visit [tinyurl.com/SupportAmazonWorkers](https://tinyurl.com/SupportAmazonWorkers) or send money using the Venmo app to @PDXDSA, indicating it's for "Amazon Solidarity."*

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# Revolution Starts at Work: A Job Fair for Socialists

→ BY LAURA WADLIN AND WADE HILTS



BREAD & ROSE CITY

WINTER 2019

Last November, our chapter's Labor Working Group staged a job fair unlike any other. Rather than host employers themselves, this job fair aimed to connect socialists seeking employment with socialists organizing a union in their current workplace. The idea is that a cluster of like-minded folks at the same job has a better chance of winning a unionization campaign than thinly spread lone wolves—and those who attended our event were ready to take a job with that goal at heart. This practice of joining a workplace with the intention of building a union is called “salt-ing,” and it is one of the labor movement’s oldest and most effective tactics.

## THERE IS POWER IN A UNION

Militant labor unions are a fundamental source of power in the fight against capitalism. But in the United States today, only 11 percent of the workforce is unionized, down from its peak at 35 percent in 1954. As union membership has declined, so has the working class’s share of income, as well as our collective memory of the labor movement’s role in driving major societal improvements in the early 1900s.

→ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Yet all over the country there is renewed class consciousness and worker unrest. As we struggle to survive in conditions of starvation wages, exhausting workloads, bigoted management and other forms of employer abuse, the benefits of collective action are huge. In 2018 we saw a wave of labor victories: the teacher strikes in West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Washington, and Los Angeles; the McDonald's Workers' #MeToo strikes across 10 cities; and the Burgerville Workers Union (BVWU) in Portland—the first-ever fast food workers union to be certified by the National Labor Relations Board. The BVWU is part of the Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary labor union with a focus on grassroots organizing.

“Our win today isn’t just about Burgerville. It’s about history,” BVWU wrote on Facebook after workers voted for formal recognition last year. “It’s about a movement of workers who know that a better world is possible, and that together they can make that world real.”

For most, this struggle will not be easy. Employers are well-aware of the power of a united workforce, and they use a range of tactics to crush a union drive. They punish dissenters, pit worker against worker and paint unions as a demanding, meddling third party rather than what they really are: democratic organizations of workers that use collective action as leverage for change. But while the boss has their weapons in this class warfare, so do unions. “Salts” are infiltrators: they organize from within, educate the rank-and-file, plant the seeds of rebellion and build the framework for a successful union campaign.

**“It’s about a movement of workers who know that a better world is possible, and that together they can make that world real.”**

## THE SOCIALIST JOB FAIR

On Nov. 7, 2018, over 60 socialists gathered at a union hall in Portland for the Socialist Job Fair. In the first portion of the night, 12 organizing committees (OCs) from a variety of local workplaces each gave a brief presentation to the audience during which they described their employer, the working conditions and how a union drive might look there. The room was charged with revolutionary sentiment as workers told familiar stories of greedy bosses, erratic schedules and fake “woke” PR campaigns. But organizers also shared their victories, such as the newly instituted policy at Burgerville to allow pronouns on staff name tags. These details left the audience with a vision of what a union can achieve.

Some of the OCs are already well-known to the public, including Amazon workers, Providence hospital workers, Cascadia Behavioral Health workers, New Seasons Workers United and BVWU. There were

also several not-yet-public campaigns in such industries as food processing, food service, retail, social services and hospitality. Once each OC had spoken to the crowd, we transitioned to the “break-out” portion that resembled a traditional job fair. OCs represented themselves at tables while potential salts circled the room to

connect with the workplaces that fit their skills and circumstances. Attendees also mingled and engaged in lively discussions about what they had heard.

A few weeks after the Job Fair, we caught up with DSA member Chloe\* to get her impression of the event. Like many other attendees, she had limited experience with union organizing, and she appreciated “the fact that there is no prerequisite (for salting) other than wanting to try and make positive change.” Chloe hadn’t worked a paying job in 16 years and figured the Christmas season would be her best shot at reentering the workforce.

Then she heard about the Socialist Job Fair at a DSA meeting. “If I’m gonna go work making money for The Man, I might as well have an ulterior agenda and do two jobs at once,” Chloe said. She signed up with Amazon.

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## MAKING IT HAPPEN

To protect the privacy of the OCs and salts, the Socialist Job Fair was not open to the public. This presented some unique challenges in driving turnout. For instance, organizers could not broadcast the location ahead of time, and instead we sent that information one day in advance to each individual on a curated guest list. Recruitment of guests took many forms: We pitched our fellow DSAers at meetings, visited other local socialist organizations, posted fliers around the city, did a social media blitz and dug through our own personal networks.

Before any potential salt was invited to the Job Fair, they first met with a member of our Outreach Committee for a one-on-one chat during which we assessed the person's political tendencies and commitment to the project, looking carefully for any signs of infiltration. Once the person agreed to join our project and attend the Job Fair, our Security Committee did a background check and examined their online presence, in addition to providing physical security at the event. While the extent of our precautions might seem overzealous to some, our organizers understand from personal experience the danger of a corporate agent or right-wing disruptor. Our diligent efforts allowed us to enjoy a safe and well-attended event.

## POWERING FORWARD

In the time since the Job Fair, we have doubled our network of OCs and helped salts get jobs at targeted work sites. Although the fruits of these first steps will become clearer in the weeks and months ahead, we have already seen a burst of interest in workplace organizing among our DSA cohort. We are now turning our attention to building a culture of mutual aid and establishing various forms of support for salts including social events, training sessions, mentoring, research, legal assistance and hardship funds.

As a new organizer, Chloe is glad to have these opportunities. She was hired at Amazon soon after the job fair, and she said it's been physically brutal. The fast pace of the warehouse also makes it difficult to build relationships, but she attended a group outing where one coworker remarked unprompted that maybe they should start unionizing. Looks like Chloe already has allies.

The road to building a union can be long and hard, and change doesn't happen when people only look out for themselves. We win when we fight together—when we recognize that an injury to one is an injury to all. Our work in Portland DSA Labor is driven by this commitment to collective action. And we're just getting started.

*\*Name has been changed.*

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# ORGANIZED



# Socialists for Housing Justice: PTU and DSA Build Tenant Power

→ BY DAVID PURUCKER



Photo Credit: Wimby Tenants Union

In 2015, Portland declared a housing “state of emergency”, citing a decade-long period of underbuilding and rising rates of homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Willamette Week reported recently that Oregon has one of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the country.<sup>2</sup> The cause is obvious—housing in Oregon’s big cities is less affordable than ever. According to a recent report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the average Oregon renter can no longer afford a one-bedroom apartment even with a full-time job.<sup>3</sup> “In the Portland area,” reports The Oregonian, “even the cost of a studio apartment exceeds the estimated median income for an average renter household.”<sup>4</sup> Portland’s housing situation is dire.

To fix it, renters need to build collective power and confront the landlord class. Bread and Rose City spoke with Dom Belcastro and Sammy Black, interim co-chairs of Portland DSA’s new Housing and Tenant Rights Working Group, about how socialists can build power for the renting class.

Dom and Sammy explained that Portland DSA’s involvement with tenant and housing work has its origins in their years of organizing with Portland Tenants United (PTU), a member-driven all-volunteer organization that focused from the start on helping renters form tenants unions — building-based organizations that represent tenants’ collective interests

against landlords. PTU also engaged in a variety of fights at the city and state levels, winning some major victories, like helping get Chloe Eudaly elected and a pioneering renter relocation ordinance passed. Because of the relocation law, landlords must now pay tenants' moving expenses if issuing a no-cause eviction, refusing to renew a lease, or forcing tenants to move with rent increases of 10 percent or more. The law is considered the strongest in the country, and housing advocates are looking to replicate it in cities like Oakland, New York, and Minneapolis.

However, according to Sammy and Dom, the demands of coalitions and political advocacy put a strain on the small organization. According to Sammy, "we've found that in the general political landscape, our involvement in nonprofit coalitions has been much less effective than our work in building-based organizing." Portland DSA's emergence in early 2017 changed the playing field. Organizers trained by PTU have played an important role in growing Portland DSA. At the same time Portland DSA's rise presented an opportunity for PTU to shift back to its core strength — direct tenant organizing. Sammy and Dom call it a "realignment." "We thought, DSA has a different membership base, a different kind of clout," says Sammy. "It makes a lot more sense to — in a certain sense—contract PTU and focus on the direct tenant organizing, which we've always been doing. To the extent that we're interested in policy change at the city, the county or the state, to have that happen inside this DSA working group (makes more sense). Because DSA is explicitly a political group."

With Portland DSA's help, PTU can focus on helping more tenants' unions get organized. Recently, residents at the huge Wimbledon Square and Gardens complex in Southeast Portland self-organized a union and reached out to PTU for support. Potentially, these kinds of tenant unions have enormous structural power. On a recent podcast hosted by DSA member Jeremy Salmon, PTU and DSA organizer Margot Black explained her vision for a citywide tenants union: "We have about 120,000 renting households in the city of Portland. Imagine if even 5,000 of them, just one month, said, 'We're not paying the rent any more!'... They can't evict 5,000 people in one month! We jam the system.... At the end of the day, the main power we can leverage is the rent we pay."<sup>5</sup>

The Housing and Tenant Rights Working Group, which was officially founded in December 2018 after a year as a caucus, can support this tenant organizing directly — by showing up in solidarity and donating to legal funds — and indirectly, by targeting those in power at the city, the county, and in Salem. Dom says the first major objective for the working group will be launching a new chapter campaign to win a universal right to eviction representation. On the legislative front, the working group will fight to enact statewide rent control, end no-cause evictions, and build support for alternative housing models like co-ops and community land trusts.

All of these struggles help keep people in their homes. But Sammy and Dom say this work is fundamentally about dignity, and finding solidarity in our shared conditions. Tenant organizing breaks down the isolation that renters are told is the norm. "It's the kind of stuff that homeowners are all about," Sammy told me. "I want my kids to know the neighbors,' and stuff like that. Culturally, we understand this for homeowners, but we pretend like it doesn't exist for renters. As we move into this stage of late capitalism and intense urbanism, where more and more people live in apartments and rent, are we literally writing off an entire class of people who don't deserve these basic dignities?" Not if PTU and Portland DSA have anything to say about it.

<sup>1</sup> City of Portland Ordinance #188626, October 2017, <http://prosperportland.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Housing-Emergency.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wweek.com/news/2018/12/17/oregon-has-nations-second-highest-rate-of-unsheltered-homeless-people-according-to-new-federal-report/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.oregonlive.com/expo/news/er-ry-2018/06/5d11955033353/the\\_average\\_oregon\\_renter\\_cant.html](https://www.oregonlive.com/expo/news/er-ry-2018/06/5d11955033353/the_average_oregon_renter_cant.html)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> <https://soundcloud.com/givingthemicep-43-housing-justice-and-tenants-unions>



# Chapter Updates

## ECOSOCIALIST CAUCUS AND THE STOP JORDAN COVE CAMPAIGN

With the past year's record-breaking heat waves and droughts, severe storms and wildfires that scorched the Pacific Northwest, it's hard to ignore the climate chaos around us. In addition to supporting policies like the Green New Deal to help shift our country toward a more sustainable economy, we must stop the fossil fuel industry's efforts to expand.

In December, Portland DSA's membership voted to join a campaign against Jordan Cove, a fracked-gas export terminal and pipeline proposed on the Oregon coast. If built, Jordan Cove would become the largest source of emissions in the state, making it impossible for us to reach our climate goals. As socialists, we must build a society that values people and the planet over corporate profits. We can no longer ignore capitalism's role in fueling climate change or in exploiting the working class. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will begin taking comments on the project soon, with a final decision expected around the end of 2019. Make sure your voice is heard as we fight to #StopJordanCove.

## ANTI-IMPERIALIST WORKING GROUP

Thousands of Blazers fans were stunned when a Marine Corps veteran honored as a "Hometown Hero" during a November game unzipped his jacket to reveal a shirt that read "END THIS SPONSORSHIP" and "#NOLEUPOLD." The veteran was DSA member Josuee Hernandez, who used the recognition as a platform to protest the Trail Blazers' partnership with war profiteer Leupold & Stevens, a Beaverton manufacturer that supplies sniper rifle scopes to the Israeli Defense Forces.

"I think it's terrible that Leupold & Stevens actively profits from war crimes," Hernandez told the Portland Mercury after the stunt. "I think they know how morally awful that is, so they're sponsoring the 'hometown hero' segment at Blazers games to siphon the local goodwill of a generally anti-war and progressive state. The Blazers are a symbol of Portland and they purport to do a lot of good for the community, so why should they continue to do business with war profiteers? At minimum, they should end that partnership."

Members of DSA's Anti-Imperialist Working Group have also been handing out fliers and projecting messages on the Moda Center to raise awareness of the controversial sponsorship during games. Local veterans and first responders recently sent a letter to the Trail Blazers calling for an end to Leupold's partnership as well. To read the letter, visit [medium.com/@dsaportlandoregon](https://medium.com/@dsaportlandoregon)

## EVENTS & ACTIVITIES WORKING GROUP

Hundreds of DSA members, friends, family and comrades came together for The Socialist Party on Dec. 9. Held at Holocene, the chapter's holiday party was a potluck with signature drinks like "Punch a Nazi Punch" and "French 1789," Socialist Giant Jenga, plus a photobooth with Marx beards, reindeer union protest signs and Gritty. Portland band Tino's Dream played live music, and dozens of kids colored and made holiday crafts. The Events & Activities Working Group organizes DSA's social and community-building events, including coffee hours, happy hours, karaoke nights, movie screenings, parties and more. These events are key to the movement—helping to mobilize our base, engage less active and non-members, create connections and build solidarity in the chapter.

## POLITICAL EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

The Political Education Working Group recently celebrated the first cohort to graduate from Portland DSA's Socialist Foundations program. This four-week training program was designed to engage and empower DSA members with knowledge and skills to take on and win against the capitalist class. The next session will open for registration soon, so be on the lookout! In addition, watch for Intro to Socialism presentations, which will be open to members and guests and will include Q&A, and on Feb. 24, the group will host a public event: "A Debate: How Should DSA Relate to Electoral Politics?" When available, details will be posted on the chapter's website.

## CALLING FOR PORTLAND TO LEAVE THE JOINT TERRORISM TASK FORCE

As 2019 began, DSA members were calling on the Portland City Council to withdraw from the Joint Terrorism Task Force, a longstanding concern for many Portlanders. The FBI and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the biggest players in the JTTF, regularly engage in profiling and surveillance practices that are prohibited by state law. Our community will be safer when people's needs are met—not be giving the police even greater power and less oversight.

## SOCIALIST FEMINISTS AND THE WOMEN'S STRIKE

The Socialist Feminist Caucus is gearing up to help organize the International Women's Strike in Portland on March 8. The strike recognizes the marginalization and silencing of the 99 percent of women: women who work inside and outside of the home, women of color, Muslim women, Native women, immigrant women, disabled women, lesbian, cis, queer and trans women. It is part of an international movement of class struggle feminism fighting back against misogyny such as Trump's, as well as the conditions that led to the Trump presidency—economic inequality, imperialism, criminalization, and racial and sexual violence.

## EAST COUNTY BRANCH

Portland DSA's East County Branch, which includes DSA members who live or work east of 82nd Avenue, including in Gresham, Fairview, Troutdale, Corbett and other areas within the eastern part of Multnomah County, has been spreading the word about its formal recognition by hosting social events such as coffee get-togethers and happy hours. Make sure to check the chapter calendar to find upcoming events near you.

## WASHINGTON COUNTY BRANCH

In January, the chapter's Washington County Branch turned out members to public events, including a city of Beaverton hearing on the local affordable housing code, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden's Sherwood town hall meeting and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley's Beaverton town hall. Branch members also continue to meet regularly and are launching a mobilization effort to organize the community and build socialism in Washington County.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WORKING GROUP

The Information Technology Working Group is tasked with protecting the chapter's data and communications systems and with promoting a culture of information security among Portland DSA members. Since its founding in August, the working group has focused on improving the password management practices for administrators of the chapter's online accounts. Group members have also been testing alternatives to the chapter's overloaded Google Drive system and developing check-in tools to improve security at chapter meetings.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

The chapter's Tax the Rich campaign, Electoral Working Group, Socialists of Color, Queer Caucus and other committees and groups continue to organize in Portland.

To find events, visit [portlanddsa.org/calendar](http://portlanddsa.org/calendar).

