

EQUALITY

MADSA Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America

A People's Inauguration: Call to Action Jan. 13



Mary Hooks of Southerners on New Ground led a rally at the State Capitol Nov. 11 to protest Kemp's theft of the election, resulting in her arrest (see p. 4). Photo: Kevin Lowery.

On Sunday, January 13th from 3-5pm, Metro Atlanta DSA, alongside other local organizations, will gather at GSU Hurt Park, 100 Edgewood Ave. SE, Atlanta 30303 to hold a People's Inauguration to further oppose and protest Brian Kemp's governorship.

During our rally we plan to not only continue expressing our disapproval for the divisive tactics Kemp employed during his campaign, and the racist policies he upheld as secretary of state, but the People's Inauguration will also

mark the beginning of our resistance to Kemp's tenure as governor should he refuse to acknowledge and advance the demands and interests that we, the people, plan to set forth.

On the agenda are speakers from various organizations and backgrounds who will vocalize their thoughts and insights on Kemp as governor and as a public representative of Georgia's people. There will also be great music, stations for sign-making, and, of course comradery! For any questions, please message our Facebook page. (See also Coming Events, Jan. 14, p. 8).

Statement on the Georgia Elections, by the MADSA Executive Committee

Brian Kemp, by continuing the shameful legacy of disenfranchising southern black and brown people, weaponized our legal system to steal the Georgia Governor's race. Backed by the billionaire class, Kemp used his position as Secretary of State to suppress the voice of everyday Georgians in pursuit of a racist and fascist agenda. The Georgia election process was a sham from beginning to end.

The Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America refuse to concede power to Kemp or any process that works to silence the voices of working people. We stand committed to elevating the voices of the 1.4 million Georgians who have been wrongly purged from the voter rolls under Brian Kemp's term as Secretary of State since 2010, and we will stand with our allies



MADSA

to deliver those voices to the halls of power. But we see beyond this election. The battle for the future of our state is just beginning.

Whether at the state capitol, the governor's mansion or city and county halls of government, we will speak truth to power and demand policies that grant dignity and respect to all residents of Georgia. If those in power refuse to hear us, we will withdraw our consent to be governed by a corrupt system rigged for the rich, who steal not only our elections, but also our paychecks, our dignity, our lives, and our children's and their children's futures.

We will not give away our power. We call for a people's inauguration. Stand up, speak up, be counted, and be heard. Solidarity!

At the Stewart Detention Center With El Refugio

By Andy Bedingfield

Whether or not you're already a member of MADSA, my trip this past Saturday to Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin with a group of fellow MADSA carpool comrades (see photo) was absolutely worth repeating yourselves, and lemme tell y'all why.

El Refugio is a hospitality house located just blocks away from the gates of Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia. El Refugio provides room and board to families of those who have been incarcerated inside the facility. It chills the blood to know that the best job available to most adults in Lumpkin is paradoxically at this corporate correctional facility, designed to do ICE's bidding.

After getting past the gates and barbed wire fences, filling out some forms, and waiting for an hour (sometimes, I'm told, it's more like two, or just 20 minutes; it depends), I did the TSA dance, waited some more, and talked with Fernando (name changed) for an hour.

Fernando is in his early twenties. He comes from a Latin American country with a strong environmental record. I talked with him about mountains a lot, and the outdoors. We discussed Alfonso Cuarón's film *Y Tu Mama Tambien*, and he told me about his children and family back home. He didn't want to tell me much about his situation, though, and I understood, politely attempting from then on to avoid the topic. He didn't ask many questions either, preferring to let me stumble through my Spanish. I think he was just surprised anyone came to speak with him. I told him about El Refugio, and that I was a socialist, and that I came in the name of internationalism. He understood. We talked more of the mountains.

One might assume that almost all of the inmates were from Central or South America, but some of my comrades ended up talking with a Palestinian man, Bassem (name changed) who



MADSA visitors to Stewart Detention Center, at the El Refugio house. (L to R) Jeff Ratto, Andy Bedingfield, Alexander Hernandez, Jon Stachewicz, Speck Kevin Pratt, Rachel Kahn, Haley Reid, Barbara Landay.

fled settler colonial Israel only to end up locked away in the settler colonial United States. This only reinforces my belief that solidarity with Palestine is integral to a budding left internationalist foreign outlook in the imperial core, one that says all oppressed people deserve our solidarity, and all walls which hold them back must come down and be barred from arising again if our position is to mean anything to the victims of a disastrous, ongoing, neoliberal foreign policy.

MADSA should continue sending groups to Lumpkin on similar weekend trips. This is a great way to radicalize our membership, new and established. The people who are brutalized by immigration authorities within and without our borders—within and without the corporate institutions that prop up one criminal administration after another—these

victims are people, and our duty as socialists, and moreover as fellow humans, must be upheld.

Direct action manifests itself in myriad ways, and in this situation we have an opportunity to assist people who are in real trouble, whether with an hour of human conversation or

free lodging and meals for their visiting families, or ordering books for inmates who don't have access to literature in such restrictive prisons. It means we have our work cut out for us in 2019 and beyond. Let's rise to meet that challenge this year, MADSA. (For more info: Immigration@masda.ga)

Solidarity in Action – Fall 2018

During the past few months, MADSA members have joined with allies in a variety of actions to advance our demands for a more just society:

- **Denounced fake “crisis pregnancy centers”**—These are fraudulent religious organizations staffed by non-medical personnel and intended to manipulate poor and working-class women, especially women of color, into avoiding actual comprehensive reproductive healthcare clinics. They get \$2M/year from our state tax dollars! In early Sept. one CPC network, CareNet, held a convention at the Marriott Marquis downtown. MADSA member and AmplifyGA Campaign Manager Jaira Burke organized a week-long community response, flashing a very visible reproductive justice message. “We rattled the CareNet president and many attendees, while drawing praise from pedestrians and motorists downtown,” said Daniel Hanley.



Flashing for reproductive rights.

- **Redlighted the Gulch**—The city's Sept. 26 public meeting to promote the Gulch development boondoggle—which will divert public funds to a corrupt developer while failing to address our affordable housing crisis—drew an overflow

crowd that filled two large rooms. Some 12-15 MADSA members attended, in solidarity with the Housing Justice League and other community folks, both organized and individuals, who made their voices heard throughout the proceedings though we were only allowed to submit written questions – not public comments – and only a small number of mostly safe questions were answered by the officials. For more re MADSA's position, see 9/27 blog post at masda.ga. On Nov. 5, the City Council voted to approve the development plan, though it is in litigation as of this writing.



The struggle for the future of downtown Atlanta continues.

- **Protested Miseducation Secretary DeVos**—At only two hours' notice on Oct. 3, Ga Tech YDSA, joined by nearly 50 members of Ga. Tech College Democrats, confronted Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to protest privatization, austerity, and corruption. “We won't be seeing Betsy DeVos on campus again for a long time. Good riddance!” they said in a Facebook post. “She has protected rapists at the expense of survivors of sexual assault. She has enriched her personal friends and family at the expense of students and the public. She has stoked imperialist war from which her family personally benefits. She has worked to defund public schools instead of giving our teachers fair salaries. Students are right to be angry at her and all who collaborate with her as she wages a class war on behalf of the ruling billionaire class against the public. . . YDSA will never step down in our

calls to enact College For All, to forgive student debt, and to decommodify education.”



Ga. Tech YDSA mobilized vs. Miseducation Secretary Betsy DeVos.

• **Fought for \$15**—As we have in the past, on Oct. 4 MADSA members supported fast food workers on strike for union rights at a local McDonald, joining ATL Raise Up, Atlanta Jobs With Justice and members from area unions. ATL Raise Up kicked off a global week of strikes and rallies and a month of canvasses leading up to election day, following a blitz of town halls and roundtable meetings in 17 cities urging lawmakers to make it easier for workers to organize in unions.



Turning out for \$15 and a union. (L to R) Erin Parks, Jeff Corkill, Speck Kevin Pratt, Barbara Joye. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

• **Rallied against Kemp**—A voting rights rally in the Ga. state capitol rotunda Nov. 11 ended when police aggressively arrested some 16 people for making noise while the legislature was holding a meeting. The principal target seemed to be Southerners on New Ground leader Mary Hooks, who had been emceeding the rally and leading chants. Police shoved a 70-year old MADSA member to the ground while charging into the crowd toward Hooks. They also arrested two New Georgia Project canvassers; a man who had been especially vocal during the speeches; comedienne “the real Donna J. Trump”; a staffer for Men Stopping Violence; and State Sen. Nikema Williams (but not a white state representative who was standing next to her). Three quarters of those arrested were people of color. All arrested were charged with misdemeanors; Williams was also charged with obstruction.



Mary Hooks of Southerners on New Ground led the rally, so was targeted for arrest. Photo: Kevin Lowery

- **Signed on to statement of solidarity with the migrant caravan**—“Our Picket Lines Cross Any Border”—Initiated by Tampa FL DSA and signed by many DSA chapters. See Nov. 30 blog post at madsa.ga.
- **Wrote postcards and letters urging that our government abolish ICE**—To participate, contact alexander.hernandez@madsa.ga

AfroSocialists Getting it Together

The MADSA AfroSocialists had a great time at our recent house party held at the home of member Shaheen Rana. On Dec. 15, 25 beautiful, black and brown comrades braved the pouring rain to gather for an evening of lively conversation, libations, and celebration. We were happy to be joined by comrades from The Alliance for Black Lives, Community Movement Builders, and the DeKalb Young Dems.

Stay tuned for details on our next event -- a conversation on the intersection between socialism and the black liberation movement, featuring Kamau Franklin, founder of Community Movement Builders.

– Erin Parks



MADSA AfroSocialists and comrades.

Douglass-Debs Dinner



Erica Smiley, co-executive director of national Jobs With Justice shared insights with the 2018 Douglass-Debs dinner crowd. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

Each year, MADSA holds an awards dinner to honor Atlanta’s outstanding progressive activists. For the twelfth year in a row, we brought members of the broad progressive community together – from labor, civil rights and other organizations as well as new and veteran MADSA members. The dinner is our main source of funds, which we use to support our activities and allied organizations.



Milt Tambor received a Lifetime Achievement award.



(Top row, L to R) Milt Tambor, awardee; Alexander Hernandez MADSA officer at-large; HJL staffer; Erin Parks MADSA chair; Jeff Corkill MADSA officer at-large; Nate Knauf, Ga Tech YDSA chair; (middle row L to R) Barbara Joye, MADSA recording secretary; Alexa Vaca, awardee; Tim Franzen, HJL; Speck Kevin Pratt, MADSA treasurer; (bottom row, L to R) Minnie Ruffin, awardee; HJL staffer; Erica Smiley, co-executive director, Jobs With Justice; Shannan Reaze, director, Atlanta Jobs With Justice. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins.

Keynote speaker Erica Smiley, co-executive director of national Jobs With Justice, emphasized that the only way the working class can win is by making the fight against white supremacy central to our united efforts.

Douglass-Debs awardees this year were Alexa Vaca of TakeAKneeKSU and the Housing Justice League. We also presented Minnie Ruffin with the new Ella Baker Award for Social Justice, and our founder Milt Tambor with a Lifetime Appreciation Award. See madsa.ga>About/Docs for the program booklet, which includes profiles of the awardees and a report on our previous year’s activities. Photos: Reid Freeman Jenkins.

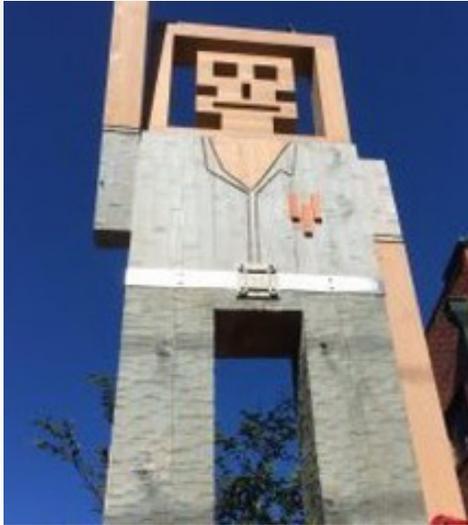
News Flashes

- **Atlanta to host national DSA convention Aug. 2–4.** DSA, which now has over 55,000 members, chose Atlanta for the convention held every two years that chooses national leadership and priorities—a great opportunity to meet comrades from all over the country and help shape the future of DSA. We will need volunteers. Expect more info at madsa.ga and at dsausa.org as plans develop.

Right: Plenary session at the 2017 DSA convention in Chicago.



- **“Solidarity” Sculpture Installed at Beer Garden.** “Georgia’s first monument to socialism and workers’ solidarity in...ever as far as I know. Thanks to Johnny Martinez and the other awesome folks at the Georgia Beer Garden for giving it a home and Evereman for making it” said comrade Eric Robertson. The 18-foot statue by MADSA member and people’s artist James Wiggins (a.k.a. Evereman), which stands at the entrance to the Garden, was unveiled Nov. 6. It features



MADSA member Evereman (James Wiggins) designed this statue to celebrate our values.

the red rose symbol of democratic socialism; the raised fist of solidarity; the West African symbol Mpatap (“peace after a time of strife”); and steel boots -- “for the throats of the oppressor” according to Wiggins.

- **Senator Perdue Snatches YDSA Member’s Phone.** On Oct. 13, a YDSA Ga. Tech member attended a public Brian Kemp for Governor campaign event on Tech’s campus. When the student attempted to ask their senator, David Perdue, a question about racist voter suppression, Perdue said “No, I’m not doing that” and snatched the student’s phone, hiding it behind his back before finally returning it. The student is suing Perdue for civil battery.

- **Tech YDSA Fights for Student Mental Health.** YDSA GT is continuing the work of roasting the admin and pushing for decommodifying healthcare on campus, very confident we can win free psych appts and hospitalization costs! – Nate Knauf

- **YDSA grows in Atlanta.** In addition to our strong YDSA chapter at Ga. Tech, students have formed organizing committees at Emory, Kennesaw and Ga. State Universities, the first step to becoming chartered as chapters. An Athens/U. GA. YDSA chapter, independent of the university, held its first meeting in August. They are working to gain higher wages for professional full-time workers at U. Ga.; build and educate their membership base; reach out to local high schools; and build coalitions.

MADSA Meets: Learning, Planning, Voting, Getting to Know Each Other

Everyone – member or not – is welcome to attend our monthly general meetings, which offer information, comradeship and dialogue as well as democratic decision making (though only members may vote).



Some of the 50 members and friends who came to our December meeting, greeted by Membership Secretary Lisa Ashway. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins.

In October, Gregory McKelvey, our newest officer (at-large), shared lessons from his impressive organizing experience in Portland, OR, and we heard about the many resources MADSA offers.



Gregory McKelvey and son Stokely. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

November's meeting (and fabulous potluck dinner) at our office featured Amilcar Valencia, director of El Refugio, which helps immigrants in the notorious Stewart detention center by facilitating visits from families and others. (See story on p.2 on our visit to Ft. Stewart Dec. 29.)



Amilcar Valencia of El Refugio spoke at our meeting. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

In December, the veteran public interest lobbyist Larry Pellegrini (a former Douglass-Debs Award winner) clued us in on what to expect at the Ga. General Assembly session that starts Jan. 14.



Larry Pellegrini briefed us on the upcoming doings at the Ga. Capitol. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

We also made some important decisions:

- Agreed to sponsor "People's Inauguration" events at the Ga. Capitol Jan. 13-14 (see p. 1).
- Accepted the honor of hosting DSA's national convention in Atlanta this August – an opportunity to meet comrades from all over the country and help shape DSA's future. More information about how to get involved will follow as plans develop.
- Accepted Anaia Leilani Jolie's application to take departing grievance officer Matthew Wolfsen's place. She is a clinical psychologist experienced with conflict resolution. We are seeking one more grievance officer. They will work to ensure fair treatment and safety for all MADSA members. If interested, contact executive@madsa.ga.

- Adopted a plan for members to form working groups more systematically, starting as less formal interest groups before meeting certain criteria to ensure they have structure and accountability. For details: info@madsa.ga
- Held our annual election of MADSA officers in September.
- Voted to sign on to the Southerners On New Ground



MADSA officers elected Sept. 22. (L to R) At-large member Gregory McKelvey and son Stokely; Recording Secretary Barbara Joye; Treasurer Speck Kevin Pratt; Chair Erin Parks; at-large member Jeff Corkill; Membership Secretary Lisa Ashway; member at-large Alexander Hernandez. Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins.

petition urging the City of Atlanta to cease participating in the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE), a program that sends city police to Israel to receive training in repressive and racist policing tactics. (Note: This was also included in demands that the now inactive J-20 Coalition, which MADSA belonged to, presented to City Hall in 2017.)

Finally, at our last three meetings we enjoyed "socialist speed dating" sessions, in which rotating pairs of attendees get to know and learn from each other by briefly sharing our political histories and our understanding of key socialist concepts. In December the subject was Medicare for All - a national DSA priority and the focus of a planned MADSA canvassing project.



"Socialist speed-dating." Photo: Reid Freeman Jenkins

Coming Events*

Jan. 10, 7:30–9 pm. Bread and Roses Reading Group, “ABCs of Socialism” Part 2

MADSA office, 52 Fairlie St NW, Atlanta, near 5 Points MARTA station. Discuss chapters 1–6 of ABCs of Socialism (Jacobin). Come even if you missed the first session. Copies available for purchase or loan at the session, or see pdf <https://s3.jacobinmag.com/issues/jacobin-abcs.pdf>

Jan. 13, 3–5pm. People’s Inauguration rally: “Not Our Governor”

GSU Hurt Park, 100 Edgewood Ave. SE, Atlanta 30303
Metro Atlanta DSA and partners will hold a people’s inauguration rally to protest Brian Kemp and the stolen election (see p. 1). Watch our Facebook page and emails for more details TBA.

Jan. 14, 7–10 pm. Official Ga. governor’s inauguration: “Occupy McCamish!”

McCamish Pavilion, Georgia Institute of Technology
Ga. Tech YDSA and friends will attend.

Jan. 18, 7pm. Holiday party.

First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr, Atlanta 30307. Celebrate 2018 and kick off 2019, with food, beverages, music. Need a ride from the station? Email info@madsa.ga. If you can, bring a donation of warm clothing for homeless people.

Jan. 21, 1:45pm. Martin Luther King Jr. Day march and rally

Convene at 1:15pm at Peachtree and Baker Streets, downtown Atlanta. March behind MADSA’s banner with the labor contingent, celebrating MLK’s 90th birthday and the continuing struggle for justice.



MADSA members at the 2017 M.L. King March

Jan. 26, 4–6pm. MADSA general meeting (Executive Committee meeting 2–3:30)

CWA Local 3204, 279 Logan St. SE, Atlanta. Near King Memorial MARTA Station, accessible, childcare available. If you can, please bring a donation of warm clothing for homeless

people. Need a ride from the station? Email info@madsa.ga. Meetings are livestreamed via a Zoom video call: <https://zoom.us/j/910735999> or telephone only: US: +1 (669) 900-6833; meeting ID: 910 735 999.

Feb. 2, 9 am. Protest the KuKluxKlan rally

Stone Mountain Park. See [#flowerunited.org](https://www.flowerunited.org); www.flowerunited.org; or facebook.com/flowersunited

Feb. 9, 12–4pm Medicare for All canvassing

Doraville MARTA station. Info: medicare@madsa.ga

Feb. 14, 7:30–9 pm. Bread and Roses Reading Group, “ABCs of Socialism” final session

MADSA office, 52 Fairlie St NW, Atlanta, near 5 Point MARTA station. Discuss chapters 7–13 of ABCs of Socialism (Jacobin). Come even if you missed the first two sessions. Copies available for purchase or loan at the session, or see pdf <https://s3.jacobinmag.com/issues/jacobin-abcs.pdf>

Feb. 15, 7pm. Eat, Drink and Be Marxist

Georgia Beer Garden, 420 Edgewood Ave. SE, Atlanta 30312. Enjoy comradeship and a brew with MADSA members and friends at this friendly member-owned bar featuring local beers and great food (Marxism not required).

Feb. 23, 4–6pm. MADSA general meeting (Executive Committee meeting 2–3:30)

CWA Local 3204, 279 Logan St. SE, Atlanta. Near King Memorial MARTA Station, accessible, childcare available. If you can, please bring a donation of warm clothing for homeless people. Need a ride from the station? Email info@madsa.ga. Meetings are livestreamed via a Zoom video call: <https://zoom.us/j/910735999> or telephone only: US: +1 (669) 900-6833; meeting ID: 910 735 999.

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Metro Atlanta DSA encourages our members to contribute to this newsletter. Let us know what’s going on in your community—your struggles, inspirations, successes. Appeal for support, share pictures, ask questions, or editorialize.

Send submissions to:

Barbara Joye

barbara@freejoye.com

For information about **Metro Atlanta DSA:**
madsa.ga

For information about the
Democratic Socialists of America: dsausa.org

Equality is edited by Barbara Joye ♦ Production Barbara Segal

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*For MADSA working group meetings, see “Events” at madsa.ga