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Des Moines Mutual Aid Monthly

Fight for Des Moines Public Schools

Kids in Des Moines Public Schools deserve a fair shot

BY COMRADE SCARY LARRY

On Sept 26, when news broke that Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) Superintendent Ian Roberts had been detained by ICE, the community was outraged and shocked. Roberts, an former Olympic athlete from Guyana, had been working for DMPS since July of 2023 and was the first Black person to hold the position. The decision to appoint him was applauded for reflecting the diversity of their student population in leadership and the students were seemingly inspired by him.

During Roberts’ time at DMPS, a plan was created to address declining enrollment, outdated facilities, and to improve outcomes for the 30,000 students in DMPS. This plan integrated feedback from around 2,100 surveys and nearly two dozen public forums. Despite this immense amount of public input, the plan is being attributed to the district’s leadership alone.

Immediately following Roberts’ arrest, details of his alleged criminal history, and lapsed work visa emerged and the integrity of the district and its leaders was suddenly thrown into question. This launched a full Department of Justice investigation of DMPS, along with an audit of both

the Iowa Department of Education and the state’s Board of Educational Examiners. This will undoubtedly strain the already suffering school system and give credit to the racist propaganda that prompted it.

Regardless of criminal history and immigration status, Ian Roberts has never been accused of harming children. All of his alleged crimes are non-violent and he is being intentionally misrepresented as dangerous. The only thing that Ian Roberts is a threat to is the class system and white supremacy of Des Moines.

It is no mistake that his arrest and subsequent defamation came just weeks before the public is set to vote on the \$265 million bond for DMPS’s improvement plan. In a state where our representatives have been siphoning an increasing amount of tax dollars into the hands of the wealthy for 2.5 years, it’s terribly fitting for the integrity of the public schools to be thrown into question just before the public vote.

The bond plan, which will be on the November 4 ballot (early voting is open now), includes expanding preschool and daycare access, integrating career and technical training, workforce certifications, and developing interest-based schools to help keep kids engaged. This plan, if allowed

to come to fruition, would undoubtedly improve the lives of children and families in Des Moines.

This funding is about more than the leadership at DMPS, it’s about the kids. We should do everything in our power to ensure their well being. ■



No Kings

Power concedes nothing without a demand

BY SUBCOMANDANTE AMENAZA & SUBCOMANDANTE RONNIE

News outlets estimate that 5-7 million people attended the No Kings rally/parade/liberal wailing fests last October. It seems to have gotten to Trump and his base in a superficial way. Why? Well, his supporters are as superficial as the events were.

A lot of enthusiasm by the left democrats (snort) for the events like to point towards these large crowds as a show of strength. And yet there were no unified demands other than a general anti-trumpism and an apparent desire to return to the Obama years along with the imperialist and neoliberal horror show his administration was to the rest of the world.

Anti-trumpism is not a policy or a demand if it is an unorganized blob of agendas that contradict each other as much as they have no teeth. Without an organized demand and the means or the appearance

Go to these protests or not, but just like voting, don’t fool yourself into believing that it is a tactic that works. Make it the least important political act you do that day.

to enforce it, you are left with a street party. Street parties are great, but they are not a threat to any power. A successful protest scares the shit out of power.

There has been talk of radicals working with popular movements to network and expand. We learned again in 2020 that large protests do not typically result in the continued involvement of its participants in radical politics. The majority of attendees will not do a fucking thing before or after the event.

Go to these protests or not, but just like voting, don’t fool yourself into believing that it is a tactic that works. Make it the least important political act you do that day.

Des Moines City Council Escalates Social Cleansing

BY COMRADE JORDAN

The demons of the city council have sharpened the teeth of their pigs to assault the most vulnerable of our community. The city council used a wildly inadequate expansion of the primary shelter (25 beds) to justify removing a provision that protected homeless people from arrest when the shelter is full. This does not make sense to any thinking person: it does not matter how many beds there are if none are available. Local ogre Chris Coleman pointed to the real motivation to the change; he indicated the problem for the city is that only one person has been arrested for not having access to a home so far.

When homelessness was criminalized a year ago, these abominations downplayed their cruelty with this exception. Now, that this performance of humanity has actually gotten in the way of putting homeless people in jail, it has been discarded.

Social cleansing is not a new phenomenon. Devils have used positions of power to eliminate undesirables throughout history: the South Korean social purification

project, the social cleansing groups of 1980s Colombian National Police, the detention and eventual extermination of “asociales” by the Nazis. This evil system is not inherent to humanity, but the heroic responses of communities rising to rip it apart are part of a long tradition of humans building toward a just society. Tactics for dealing with monsters that prey on the vulnerable have been passed down for generations: driving a wooden stake through its heart, ending it with silver bullets, burning necks after decapitation to prevent the sprouting of new heads.

We cannot defeat homelessness under capitalism. Capitalism requires the philosophical position that the poor deserve their fate and the threat of destitution as a whip for workers. Engaging with capitalist politicians to eliminate homelessness is a waste of valuable effort that must be directed to actual problem solving. ■



Des Moines Mutual Aid’s Points of Unity

OWe believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.

1We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people’s needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.

2We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don’t rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.

3We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people’s lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.

4We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.

5We are a revolutionary organization. We are united in a basic agreement that the ultimate goal of revolution is the abolition of the state and of social classes, and that the state’s institutions are not a means to achieving that end. We are against participation in electoral politics, because we are for the development of mutual aid as an alternative and widespread institution. ■

An Instrument We Cannot Wield

BY COMRADE PATRICK

We gain no pleasure from predicting Endi Montalvo-Martinez’ imminent loss in his bid for the Des Moines’ at-large city council bid. He helped kick DMPD pigs out of Des Moines Public Schools in 2020/1 and his politics are far closer to ours than his opponent, Mark Simonson, who is a demon. DMMA would welcome Simonson’s exorcism from the city council - and any other body he possesses. He once told this writer, in his then-capacity as neighborhood association president, that every social service in River Bend should be evicted so that home values would go up. Simonson is an enemy of the people. Endi at least knows the score of the class war.

Barring some sort of miracle, however, Simonson will retain his seat on election night. The only real question to be answered concerns what we should make of Endi’s failed run, and of the general trend of ‘insurgent’ left candidates in local elections.

Attentive Monthly readers will remember that the fact of state and federal preemption eliminates the legal authority of local bodies to do anything

but facilitate the flow of capital. Idealistic readers may hope that electing ‘progressives’ to local bodies may provide some local protection from extralegal federal overstep like ICE raids or local homeless sweeps. Unfortunately, the experience of LA, Memphis, and Chicago in particular refute this idea concretely.

Brandon Johnson was elected mayor of Chicago in 2023 with a surge of support from the local Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) chapter, and rode into ‘power’ along with a slate of other DSA city councilors (aldermen, in Chicago’s system). He campaigned on a progressive, even socialist platform, which he was totally unable to deliver upon. This failure is hardly his fault: the capitalist state is not a mere tool which can be wielded by the working class. It is solely an instrument of capitalist class rule.

One need not look further than Chicago’s response to federal immigration’s terror campaign in the city: the population has risen heroically to combat ICE raids, while the municipal authorities, ostensibly under the authority of a DSA mayor, have actively

aided federal agents by deploying crowd control munitions against demonstrators and beating and arresting freedom fighters. This, again, is not really the fault of Brandon Johnson or the DSA. If Johnson were to order Chicago Police to resist ICE, it is likely that he would be the subject of a coup and be arrested by his own police department.

Perhaps it is merciful that Endi’s attempt will end on election day. Were he to win, further, were the highest ambitions of the electoral left realized and a majority of the Des Moines council captured by progressives, we would find only more evidence that liberation can not be achieved by voting. The power of capital is not contained by the legal state but instead flows through whatever orifice most suits it: the county board, the state government, the police department. Political power does not grow from the slot of a ballot box. We should honor Endi’s earnest efforts by learning this lesson. Our path to power is far from clear, but we can be sure that it will not grow shorter by stopping at the polling station every November. ■

Market Ideology Corrodes Romantic Connection

BY COMRADE JORDAN

In viewing peers as a market of partners, people are flattened to a value of desirability. Someone who has high value is desired by ‘all.’ People with low value are literally undesirables. Market actors try to maximize their value - ‘obtain’ the partner with the highest value. Compatibility and connection are not factors in this conception, and all qualities are mercilessly extracted from the person as a whole and compared against the market to ascertain value. These qualities, now quantified, are then summed to determine the full value of the person. This process is a form of commodification and is destructive, unconscious, and unquestioned as part of human nature.

Capitalism also denies the inherent worthiness of a person. Humans are not worthy of resources, love, or existence unless they create value for the capitalist

class. 20th century capitalist iterations of patriarchal gender roles enforce this: boys and girls are instructed that they must produce value and children respectively to fulfill their predetermined purpose. Fulfillment for workers is provided by participation in the system that exploits and dominates them - reinforced through affirmations of those above in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

Lack of worthiness and a market view of human connection combine to reinforce the superiority of the rich. Hoarded wealth provides security, quality of life, and freedom from toil. In contrast to the excluded masses, this access to the good life inherently results in healthier, happier, and more fulfilled people - placing the wealthy atop the value hierarchy with greater influence on society as a whole. The hierarchy is self-sustaining by placing those with the most material interest in the status quo in the greatest

position of social influence. This mirrors the domination of wealth in every aspect of our society.

We must adopt and promote philosophy which regards life and connection as inherently worthwhile. The clearest reason for this position is our intolerance of the daily horrors required and facilitated by capitalism, but it is also necessary to liberate ourselves from commodification and its corrosive effect on human connection. ■

