

Young Democratic Socialists

the youth section of the Democratic Socialists of America

THE LATEST

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Socialist Summer Retreat: The Return to Valley Brook



From July 30th to August 2nd, Young Democratic Socialists from Berkeley to Boston converged on the Catskill town of Wurtsboro, New York to paint it red. Not literally of course; these youth activists were there to attend the annual Socialist Summer Retreat. Besides having a great time, activists adopted a [5 Year Strategic Plan](#), elected a new [coordinating committee](#), adopted a new [activist agenda](#), and passed a [resolution](#) outlining a plan to build bridges between YDS and [Democratic Socialists of America](#), our parent organization. ([To read to the full conference report click here](#))

Spring 2009 Red Letter is Here!

Check out coverage of our national work around the Employee Free Choice Act, our winter conference entitled "Beyond the Ballot," and local labor solidarity. The [Red Letter](#) is sent first to YDS members and chapters. To join, [click here](#).

Beyond the Ballot: Making the Movement Matter

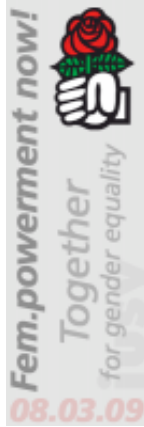


Beyond the Ballot: Making the Movement Matter brought over 150 student and youth activists from across the country to New York City from February 28th to March 1st, 2009. The conference featured



inspiring plenaries, informative workshops, and an energized participant base. [To read the conference report please click here.](#) Please contact us at yds@dsausa.org for more ways to get involved with our organization and activities.

YDS Celebrates International Women's Day!



We all learned in school that March is women's history month. Did you know, however, that March 8th was International Women's Day?

International Women's Day is a holiday celebrated all around the globe – but not in the United States. The commemorative day was established by American socialists at the turn of the 20th century. The day celebrated women's struggles for rights – especially in the labor movement. IWD was eventually adopted as an official holiday throughout the world and by the United Nations.

The [International Union of Socialist Youth](#) – the largest global political coalition for young people – published this pamphlet "[Fem. Powerment Now!: Together for Gender Equality.](#)" The newsletter includes essays, talking points, history, and current actions about the struggle for women's rights and importance of socialist feminism.

To get more involved with our feminist work, please contact YDS Feminist Issues Coordinator Kat Brausch at [kcbrausch\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:kcbrausch(at)gmail.com).

DSA Releases Economic Recovery Plan

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), YDS's parent organization has released an economic recovery plan: [Economic Recovery for Everyone](#). Please download and distribute this important document. DSA also produced a short two page flyer: [Economic Recovery that Benefits Everyone](#). Both the flyer and the recovery plan focus on the origins of the crisis and our responses to it, and connect it to the issues we raise in the [Economic Justice Agenda](#).

Solidarity with Chicago Workers of Republic Windows and Doors



On Wednesday, December 10th the New York City Young Democratic Socialists organized a solidarity rally out of the Union Square Bank of America. The gathering was co-sponsored by Jobs with Justice. The event was to highlight support for the striking Republic Windows and Doors. The union workers were ultimately victorious.

Young Democratic Socialists actions were mentioned in New Left Notes's "[Anti-Authoritarians Disrupt Bank of America Branches in New York.](#)"

[YDS Regional Conference A Success: Radical Youth and Student Activists Build Off Energy of Presidential Election](#)

On Saturday, November 22nd the William Paterson University Young Democratic Socialists chapter hosted a

New Jersey regional activist conference entitled "What Now?" The gathering, co-sponsored with several campus groups, centered upon the recent victory of Barack Obama and the role of young people in bringing progressive change. The event featured New York Times best-selling authors Greg Palast, author of *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, and John Perkins, author of *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*. Over 100 students and youth left with the notion that they should be optimistic about the future, but vigilant in building movements to hold the Obama administration accountable.

WBAI radio did a short report on the Perkins and Palast panel. [You can listen to it here](#)



(Clockwise: NYC YDS members tabling; racial justice workshop; Prof. Christine Kelly speaking on student power; crowd at Perkins and Palast plenary; DSA National Political Committee member Dr. Joseph Schwartz giving post-election analysis; Perkins and Palast during Q & A.)

Democratic Socialists on Barack Obama's Victory: Videos of DSA Honorary Co-Chair Cornel West and YDS alumnus Mark Engler

Democratic Socialists of America (YDS's parent organization) Honorary Co-Chair Dr. Cornel West was **interviewed on CNN about Barack Obama's presidential campaign**. Dr. West spoke about the inspiration for Americans with Obama's victory. West, however, also reminded viewers that the verdict on "suffering" of black "poor" and "working people" is not yet in. He stressed the need to now take a closer look at Obama's policy and nominations so we can move from symbolism to substance.

Mark Engler, author of *How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle over the Global Economy*, was a YDS member when he was a student at

Harvard University. He was interviewed by the **BBC on Barack Obama's potential economic policies**. Engler believes the Obama administration will reject the Bush model of militaristic, imperialistic, and nationalistic globalization. Engler fears, however, that Obama won't live up to his mandate for change and we are seeing the battle for the economic soul of Barack Obama. The American people know if the government can find money to bailout Wall Street, they can find that money to invest in and help working people. Engler fears a return to Clinton-type neoliberals such as Larry Summers who will push Obama to support more deregulation and curtail progressive change.

Renegotiate NAFTA Week: YDS Activists Work for Fair Trade



The Young Democratic Socialists Coordinating Committee, the volunteer leadership of YDS, recently declared the week of October 27th to November 1st "Renegotiate NAFTA Week." Renegotiate NAFTA is a petition being circulated by YDS's parent organization, **Democratic Socialists of America** (DSA), to put pressure on the next president to make changes to North American Free Trade Agreement and make future trade agreements fair. In short, the petition demands a new

agreement that adheres to the principles of fair trade (<http://www.renegotiatenafta.org/?q=node/6>) and has genuine labor and environmental protections. This petition has been endorsed by the [Student Farmworker Alliance](#) and [Student Labor Action Project](#). All over the country last week, YDS activists and their allies held educational events about the problems of NAFTA and worked to gather signatures for the petition.

There is an increased chance for this petition to have an affect now that Barack Obama will be our next president. While Obama's economic policies are undeniably capitalistic, during the primary season he said he would revise trade agreements as president. But history has proven elected officials only keep their promises when they are pressured to do so. Petitions like this one alongside grassroots action from labor activists and their student allies can make politicians listen.

Please read and sign the petition at www.renegotiatenafta.org. Let's send a collective message that we want fair trade.

Photo of Wichita State YDSers and friends at their own "Renegotiate NAFTA" rally (Stuart Elliott)

YDS Winter-to-Spring Organizing Drive

If you are involved in a YDS chapter or organizing committee, please draft an overview of how your group is doing, what you've accomplished, any problems you might have run into, what you hope to do the rest of the semester, and how national YDS can support your efforts. Contact the YDS National Organizer (david@dsausa.org) if you are interested in starting a new YDS group at your high school, college, university or community. As always, please contact our national office if you would like us to mail you or your group organizing materials in the mail or as email attachments (YDS chapter guides, buttons, literature, stickers, sample meeting fliers etc.). These are very useful when setting up a table at important events like your campus activities fair. Contact us for help organizing teach-ins, trainings, or visits from YDS organizers to strengthen existing chapters and help new ones get off the ground. We can also put you in touch with democratic socialist faculty members on campuses across the country. YDS can be reached at: yds@dsausa.org or 212-727-8610

A VISION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

YDS is the youth section of the Democratic Socialists of America. We are the only US members of the International Union of Socialist Youth, the largest political youth coalition in the world. With members and local chapters across the US, YDS works to transform our society - on the job, in the streets, in the classroom. We are a broad, diverse network of young activists who share a vision of a more humane future. Instead of waiting for some final, magical instant when a utopia appears, we organize and struggle every day to redistribute power. Building democratic socialism is a long struggle, and we take it one step at a time.

DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM

Socialism is one of the most misused words in the American political vocabulary. Contrary to misrepresentations by both conservatives and liberals, socialism is not about breadlines, fur hats, or police states. Rather, we fight for the extension of democracy into all aspects of social life, including the

economy. We are proud of the relative democratic freedoms enjoyed by US citizens. But without economic democracy, this political liberty is weak and incomplete. People must have a voice in the economic decisions which affect their lives. Democratic socialism also means fighting non-economic inequalities of power- including racism, sexism and heterosexism in all their forms. A radical democracy is the only way to ensure a world in which class, race, and gender do not decide our futures.

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