

SEP campaigns in New York, Kentucky, Massachusetts and California

Our reporters
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Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party's candidates, Jerry White for president and Phyllis Scherrer for vice president, campaigned in cities throughout the country over the weekend. Here we post reports from Brooklyn, New York; Lexington, Kentucky; Los Angeles, California; and Boston, Massachusetts.

For more information and to get involved in the campaign, visit socialequality.com.

Brooklyn, New York

The SEP campaign took to the streets in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn on Saturday. Flatbush is home to a predominantly African-American section of workers, with many immigrants from Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean. It is also the location of Brooklyn College, part of the City University of New York.

Residents and students responded with anger and frustration at the killing of Trayvon Martin and the refusal by prosecutors, more than a month later, to arrest his killer. Many connected the injustice of the Martin case to conditions in their daily lives.

Tashawn Ulysses, a street performer of busket, a type of street dancing, saw parallels with police harassment of youth on the streets of New York City. "I don't like what is going on. Racism still exists, but I don't want people to blame it on just that he was black. I am a street performer. I live around this neighborhood. I get harassed all the time by the NYPD. I don't mind that they are looking for guns, but don't stop me for nothing, or for doing something like street performing."

A health care worker responded by citing widespread economic injustice, including her own workplace experience where older workers are being pushed out and replaced with minimum wage new hires. Approximately 20 percent of Flatbush residents live below the official poverty rate. Official unemployment stands at 11 percent.

Laurence McFadden, a 10th grader at Brooklyn Academy for Science and Environment, spoke about the conditions at his school.

"We don't have lockers. They are bolted. They don't explain why. Maintenance is not kept up. We don't have paper towels, soap. We have a library, but it only has one computer and it is not for everybody's use. There are no computers in the classroom. The government should pay attention to the Board of Education because now things are not right." Laurence agreed that a new political party would be a good idea.

A number of people explained they supported Obama out of fear that things might get worse under a Republican president, while at the same time recognizing that both the Democrats and Republicans served the wealthy. In response, the SEP campaigners reviewed the actions of the Obama administration over the past three years, explaining that the Democratic Party was no less a party of the financial aristocracy than the Republicans.

Lexington, Kentucky

SEP supporters spoke with workers and students at a park in the downtown area as well as a grocery store near the University of Kentucky campus. Campaigners distributed statements by SEP presidential candidate Jerry White and engaged workers in a discussion of the economic and political situation.

Ashley, a student at the University of Kentucky, expressed her thoughts on the 2012 elections. "I don't like Romney," she said, "but Obama isn't really equipped either." In spite of this and other criticisms of the current administration, she held out hope for Obama.

Of the political process, Ashley expressed her doubts about the necessity of political parties at all. So many people, she said, simply voted for the candidate of their party without giving it another thought.

Campaigners explained the difference between bourgeois parties and the Socialist Equality Party, and discussed the importance of building the SEP as the leadership of the working class and waging an organized political struggle for socialism. Ashley agreed that the Democrats and Republicans both represent the interests of the ruling elite.

"I think they [the government] are afraid of an educated

population,” she said. “That is one of the reasons there are so many cuts to education.”

Ashley expressed her agreement with the fight for social equality, but admitted she was unfamiliar with socialism. “I don’t know much about socialism,” she said, “but I’m all for social equality for everyone. I just think that so many people are going to stay poor. It’s like we are moving backwards in time.”

She added, “There’s so much misinformation out there. A lot of Republicans say that Obama is a socialist. Like I said, I’m no expert on socialism, but I know that Obama is not a socialist. They say this because they think it will scare people.”

Before leaving, Ashley asked for a copy of the Declaration of Principles of the International Students for Social Equality, the student movement of the Socialist Equality Party. She thanked campaigners for the discussion and wished them luck.

Boston, Massachusetts

The SEP campaigned on Saturday outside Bunker Hill Community College in the Charlestown neighborhood of Boston and signed up several students interested in setting up an ISSE club on the campus.

Campaigners spoke to Sheri Rosi, a director at a non-profit preschool who is also working toward her degree in early childhood education. She said she would consider supporting the SEP campaign because there needed to be an alternative.

“I have a lot of friends who are all for Obama,” Sheri said. “They are voting for him because he’s a Democrat and they always vote Democrat. But then if I go down to Texas, some of my friends are all for the Republicans.”

She said she thought there needed to be a candidate that represented the middle of the population. “I’m in the middle, when it comes to money,” she said. “I make too much money to be eligible for Section 8 housing, or things that would help me as a single parent.

“But because of money that I’ve made as I’ve gotten further in my education, I don’t qualify. Now I’m in this middle place, and I’m paying \$1,300 a month in rent all by myself. And I don’t make enough money always to make every end meet.”

Asked about the choice offered by the two big business parties in the elections, she said she didn’t think either offered any alternative. “It’s like what Mitt Romney said in one of those debates, ‘Let’s make a \$10,000 bet,’ or that he wasn’t worried about the poor people.

“We need someone who’s looking out for us. What about the people in the middle ground? I’m working, I go to school, I’ve got sons I’ve got to raise and put through college. I love my job, I love giving back, but I don’t get paid enough.”

Shari took exception to Michelle Obama campaigning against obesity. “I think it’s all well and good that she’s promoting a

healthy lifestyle, but it really doesn’t work for regular people. I would love to buy healthy, organic food, and meat that isn’t treated with hormones and other things, but it’s expensive.”

Los Angeles, California

SEP campaigners have begun working in Maywood, a predominantly Hispanic city in Los Angeles County. Presidential candidate Jerry White will be speaking at a meeting in the area on Thursday. (See: List of Meetings) They distributed leaflets in both Spanish and English, including the recent statement from Jerry White, “Full rights for immigrant workers!” Campaigners stressed the need for a political party of the working class, which unites workers of all countries and nationalities.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with Alan, a composer and veteran of the 1990-91 Gulf War. “As far as the Obama administration is concerned, I’m still waiting for the change that was promised, and I’m starting to really doubt that he can deliver,” he said.

“It seems that everyone today is suffering, and little or nothing is being done about it. There’s always been a cutthroat aspect to the industry I work in, but these days it seems to be even worse than usual. The competition is more intense than ever and if you are lucky enough to get a contract, compensation is smaller than it’s ever been.

“Another big issue that concerns me, is the situation for young veterans. I was very fortunate that after my tour of duty I was able to get excellent care upon my return to the states. My heart really goes out to the boys returning today, though. Every week, it seems, you read about some young guy who snaps and kills several people.”

Alan also spoke about the attack on public education. “I think you might be right when you talk about an attack on the entire working class,” he said. “I don’t understand why teachers are being blamed for the state of public education. You’re not going to fix public education by firing all those teachers. It just doesn’t make sense. We live in a society now where it seems like everyone is treated as expendable.”

Eddie, a young worker, said he doesn’t even vote because he feels it is a waste of time. He goes to East Los Angeles College, which recently raised its tuition. “I have fines to pay recently for not paying tuition in full last year,” he said. “Tuition is still cheap at community college, but it still seems like a lot when you factor in books.”



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