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Why I read the WSWS

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I started reading the web site in 2009 after Obama's election. It became very clear early on that despite all the rhetoric, Obama was not going to be any different than his predecessors. Early on in his administration Obama backed down on the issue of expanding settlements in the West Bank and for me it was a very demoralizing moment.

At that time I knew very little about Marxism. Around that time I happened to see an old archive photo from the 30s or 40s depicting a striking worker being brutalized by some company thugs. The caption described the bloodied worker as a suspected communist. I had considered myself fairly up on American history but after some cursory research I realized that I was largely unaware of the history of leftist and Marxist movements in the country of my birth. I started to read more about Marxism and I was able to first see history and politics through the lens of class. Without class consciousness, the deepening failures of our political system seemed the inevitable by-products of greed or stupidity. Understanding the role of class lifts the veil and puts the system in its proper context. I looked for contemporary Marxist groups or parties without knowing what to expect. I was excited to find a number of groups active.

I contacted the CPUSA and received a packet of information. I remember sitting down and reading an editorial praising Obama for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. I didn't even finish the article. I could have read something like that in any corporate newspaper. This experience was very disorienting and I almost gave up. I found a few more groups online. I checked out the ISO's web page but there wasn't any Marxist content. They too were excited about Obama and seemed just an auxiliary wing of the Democrats.

At this low point in my political education I happened to see a flier for a meeting of the Socialist

Equality Party near my work. In bold letters the flier posted a clear challenge to people's assumptions about the progressive character of the Obama administration. On the WSWS I immediately found the historical documents (*The International and Historical Foundations of the SEP*) and the *Statement of Principles*. What struck me about the whole thing was how up front everything was.

When I read the *Statement of Principles* I was really impressed with how clear and forthright the SEP was about what it stood for. When I got to the section on identity politics I was bowled over. Reading that section enabled me to understand one of the fundamental challenges facing Marxists today. Class consciousness has been removed and largely replaced with identity politics. Identity politics is an understandable response to bigotry and prejudice but it serves ultimately only to diffuse the immense potential of a unified working class, the only force capable of destroying the class rule that deliberately fosters bigotry.

Rather than trying to force the ruling class to dole out a slightly larger piece of the pie for minorities or interest groups, the working class must and will unify and take the whole bakery. Identity politics is a dead end. I don't imagine the women and children obliterated by drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen find any comfort in the last moments of their lives that a person of color ordered the missile strike.

After reading the WSWS I realized that if capitalism had the answers to man's problems, we would have arrived there by now. Capitalism is a stage. When capitalism was born it was revolutionary, but now it has outgrown its usefulness and needs to be replaced.

I grew up in McKeesport, PA, nestled in the rotting carcass of Pennsylvania's steel industry. The giant shuttered and rusting steel mills were a constant

backdrop to my childhood. My dad was laid off from work when I was 11 years old. He didn't work in the mill, but it seemed almost all businesses were affected by the downturn in steel. Eventually he was able to find work at a smaller firm while my mom went to work as a teacher to help the family. After high school I went to the University of Pittsburgh for a few semesters. When the money ran out I joined the military rather than continue to be a financial burden on my family.

I was stationed in Asia and got to see some of the dire poverty that many people experience. When I look back on my experiences in the military one of the things that strikes me now is how apolitical it was in general. Presidential elections came and went with nothing beyond the canned debate between conservatives and liberals. Throughout most of my life politics didn't seem real or viable—this was the way things were—there were not going to be any alternatives.

For me, the disappointment of the Obama administration was kind of the last straw. This ridiculous cycle of oscillating between two parties has to change. I am almost 40 and during my life the conditions for working people have continued to deteriorate under all administrations. There has to be an alternative for the working class. After being introduced to Marxism I understand that the working class has to fight for itself.

People know fakers when they see it. Workers aren't interested in fads, pseudo-intellectual trash, or phonies. When they come to our web site they see a lone voice that is appraising things from their interests.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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