

# People's Summit attendees discuss Democratic Party, war, socialism

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20 June 2017

The 2017 People's Summit—organized by sections of the Democratic Party, the trade unions and pseudo-left organizations—attracted a heterogeneous audience in Chicago. As with last year's Summit, attendees were predominantly middle class, including former Vietnam-era antiwar protesters and members of liberal organizations in and around the Democratic Party, as well as college students the Bernie Sanders wing of the Democrats are recruiting to run for office.

In addition, several young people and others interested in socialism, including some openly hostile to the Democrats, attended. Some spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Jess Mazour is a community organizer in Des Moines, Iowa. She noted that the financial crisis of 2008 had politically radicalized her. "Before 2008, I wasn't even aware of why capitalism was a problem," she said. "I graduated with a ton of student loan debt and I work at a non-profit that doesn't pay a lot of money.

Jess spoke at length about the issues that motivated her to come to the People's Summit. "Our country doesn't have an adequate health care system to deal with the issues that everyone faces, including mental health care. Health care needs to include mental health too. More people in the younger generation suffer from mental health issues."

When asked what she thought of the Obama administration, she immediately said, "A failure. He deported more people than any other administration. The drone program was absolutely disgusting. He didn't do anything he promised and then he passed a terrible health care bill too. I voted for him the first time but I didn't vote for him the second time."

She added that she "wants an alternative to the two-party system. But I'm not against using the current

system to advance our issues either. There has to be a living wage and everyone needs access to health care and other basic rights."

Our reporters explained that the fight for the social right to health care, jobs and education are revolutionary matters today, and it would take a political movement of the working class to break the economic and political stranglehold of the corporate and financial elite and replace capitalism with socialism. To claim as Bernie Sanders and his supporters do that such a change could come about through transforming the capitalist Democratic Party into a "people's party," they said was a political fraud.

Asked about the conflict within the ruling class and the neo-McCarthyite hysteria pumped out by the Democratic Party against Trump, Jess said, "I think the Russia issue is a distraction from issues that affect my community."

Sam and Vanessa Ely recently moved to Chicago from Texas. "I work at a distribution company," Sam said. "We were both big Bernie supporters in Texas and came here to learn more.

"I was not really affiliated with the Democrats. Like a lot of people, I was not happy with the way things were handled in the elections. The Democratic Party has claimed that it's the party of the people, but they use identity politics to manipulate minorities and working class people. The way they treated Bernie and progressive voters was really just a turnoff to me.

"With Obama, we had war and drone bombings of innocent civilians. That was not OK. Just because the US deems someone a threat, that doesn't give them the right to kill innocent people. The budget also continues to rise for the military. Donald Trump is now giving a huge budget for the military. Obama did the same thing. And Trump is also making cuts to Meals on

Wheels and social programs. Why should we keep having these wars and increasing our military budget?”

Jennifer, a junior studying environmental geology at Beloit College in southern Wisconsin, came to the summit with Food and Water Watch, a health and environmental NGO. She said she supported Sanders in the 2016 election primaries, and that she had wanted “anyone but Trump” to become president.

Jennifer noted the informal and unserious atmosphere of the summit, saying, “I feel like there are a lot of people wandering around, and not taking the talks super seriously.”

Our reporters explained the WSWWS’s analysis of the People’s Summit—that it was a political trap to contain social opposition within the Democratic Party, and that what was necessary instead was a break with bourgeois politics and the building of a mass socialist movement.

Jennifer asked the reporters how they would define socialism, to which they responded that it would entail workers democratically controlling society’s wealth and resources to meet human need, not private profit. In contrast, they said, “What is capitalism today? A society based on enormous inequality, and war, and repression. As socialists, we fight for building a mass antiwar movement in the working class, for peace, and for equality.”

“I feel like that’s what I’m really into,” Jennifer responded. “I’m completely antiwar.”



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