

Moxie Lieberman: 1970-2026

Bryan Dyne
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A celebration of life ceremony was held in Seattle, Washington last month to honor the memory of Moxie Lieberman, a fiber artist and former member of the Socialist Equality Party. Lieberman, who is survived by her husband, Paul Palinkas, a member of the SEP, and her sister, Rachel K. Lieberman, died on February 5 at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle, at the age of 55. She had been hospitalized on January 2 after a prolonged decline in her health.

Born Melysa Ann Lieberman in New York City in 1970, Moxie grew up in Corte Madera, California. Her mother, Kerin, was first the office manager and the then associate director of the San Francisco Bureau of Jewish Education, while her father held numerous jobs, including various office jobs and managing a shopping center. Moxie lived with chronic illness and disability since the age of 19, when a severe illness permanently reduced her lung capacity. The illness left her massively immunocompromised.

She met her future husband, Paul, in a journalism class at the College of Marin, where despite her disability she became editor of the student newspaper. She and Paul moved to Seattle in 1998 where she worked as a graphic designer and rose to become director of a Boys and Girls Club. She was also a needle felting artist whose sculptures were exhibited across the country, including a piece on permanent display at the Exploratorium in San Francisco.

Moxie and Paul belonged to a generation that grew up in 1980s and early 1990s, when the Reagan administration marked a significant shift to the right in US politics, with the collapse of the labor movement and the transformation of the trade union bureaucracies into open agents of management. A critical turning point in this transformation was the betrayal of 1981 PATCO strike by the AFL-CIO, which defied demands for a general strike and allowed Reagan to fire 11,000 air traffic controllers and destroy their union.

The most significant change in world politics was the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 by the Stalinist bureaucracy as its final repudiation of the October 1917 socialist revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. In response, the capitalist media flooded public discourse with concepts such as “the end of history” and the beginning of a new “American century,” in an effort to suppress all forms of socialist consciousness.

The old radical organizations fell in line, including virtually every organization that called itself Trotskyist. The only political tendency that carried forward the fight for socialist revolution and the struggle for workers’ power was the International Committee of the Fourth International. Beginning in 1995, the sections of the ICFI, such as the Workers League in the United States, transformed themselves into the Socialist Equality Parties. In 1998, the ICFI established the *World Socialist Web Site*, which has become the most widely read socialist publication worldwide.

Neither Moxie nor Paul were immune to the capitalist triumphalism; Paul commented that, “for many people of our generation, knowledge of Trotsky extended no further than recognizing Snowball in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.” But the relative decline in the class struggle was short-lived. Soon after the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, which Paul attended, he and Moxie discovered the WSWWS and recognized that there was an alternative to the Stalinist or anarchist politics presented by the left radicals at the time: Trotskyism, the genuine socialism of the 21st century.

Both carried out a careful reading of the WSWWS throughout the Bush administration, and the experience of Obama—bank bailouts, expanded wars, NSA surveillance, drone assassinations, and the rolling out of the red carpet to Trump—shattered any remaining illusions in the Democratic Party and capitalism as a whole. Moxie’s transformation accelerated with

Trump's election in 2016, which forced her to examine the class character of American politics. She rejected the notion that the Democrats and identity politics could fight fascism, including a conscious rejection of Bernie Sanders and the pseudo-left organizations that supported him.

These experiences led her to encourage Paul to join the Socialist Equality Party in 2018; at the time, Moxie's illness prevented her from doing the same. In that period, both deepened their understanding of the objective nature of the contradictions of capitalism and how those gave rise to a figure like Trump. The study of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, one of the central laws in Marxist political economy, played a critical role in their understanding of the ongoing political, moral, economic and social decay of capitalism.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was the decisive factor in Moxie's decision to herself join the SEP, which she did in 2021. As an immunocompromised person, she experienced the full criminality of the bipartisan policy of mass infection. She and Paul were effectively quarantined for the last six years of her life, leaving their home in Tacoma almost exclusively for medical appointments.

The pandemic laid bare the class character of public health under capitalism. The postwar expansion of institutions like the CDC and WHO had rested on economic growth, state capacity and the geopolitical counterweight of the Soviet Union, which compelled limited concessions to social welfare. With the collapse of the USSR and the acceleration of capitalist globalization, the ruling class shed any obligation to maintain the infrastructure that protected populations from preventable disease. The normalization of mass death from COVID-19, remains not a policy failure but an expression of a system in terminal decline.

Moxie understood this and aggressively fought for the eradication of COVID-19, for masking, and for a public health response guided by science rather than profit. She recognized that this was not an individual question but a class question—the subordination of human life to capitalist accumulation. The trajectory from the triumph of mass vaccination in the 1950s and 1960s to the present-day declaration by a senior CDC official that disease is merely the “cost of doing business” traced the arc of a system that had exhausted

its capacity to protect human life. Moxie lived inside that arc.

And though Moxie's health forced her to step back from formal membership, she maintained her political perspective and continued to follow the WSWS. She supported Paul throughout this period and understood Trump's re-election as a realignment of the political superstructure to match the reality of a decaying economic system. She opposed ICE deportation operations and rejected the illusion that the 2026 midterm elections would resolve the crisis.

Moxie was also a devoted reader of the cultural criticism of David Walsh. And before her hospitalization, she expressed interest in the development of Socialism AI, recognizing the potential of the technology within the constraints capitalism imposed on it.

Moxie's death at 55 is an indictment of a social order that treats the chronically ill as expendable. A society committed to scientific progress could have offered her medical care free of cost barriers, ended the pandemic, and provided a social existence free of enforced isolation. Instead, the bipartisan normalization of COVID-19 condemned millions of immunocompromised people to years of deprivation—a policy now extended through the dismantling of vaccination programs and the withdrawal of the United States from the WHO.

The mass protests erupting against the Trump administration's deportation operations are an expression of the social movement to which Moxie dedicated herself. She did not live to see these struggles develop, but she understood and supported the socialist program and perspective that must guide them.



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