



# SOCIALIST PARTY OF MICHIGAN MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## January 2023

## Workers of Michigan Unite!

Hello Michigan socialists! As we mentioned earlier this month we have decided to launch a monthly newsletter for our membership. In here we are sharing information about events around the state, commentary and analysis of current events, important and illuminating articles, books, and documentaries, and pressing mutual aid needs.

As we are launching this we encourage membership to get involved. If you have a piece of class analysis or commentary send it to us- we'd love to include it. Same goes to suggestions for books, articles, and mutual aid we can spotlight.

Solidarity as we go into another year of organizing the working class in 2023- and please join us for our first meeting of the year which will be Saturday, February 4th at 3PM over Zoom (link included in your e-mail).



Going into Black History Month, we recommend our comrades check out what Socialist organizers were doing in the Motor City in the late 60s and early 70s in *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* by Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin.\*

Their book traces the history and legacy of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which combined street-level organizing with strong anti-capitalist critique and education to empower workers at Detroit's auto plants.

\*See also "Finally Got the News," a documentary free on YouTube

A comrade from the Kalamazoo area needs assistance with their medical expenses after experiencing police brutality while defending a houseless encampment.

In October of 2021, "K" was present with the houseless community and their allies when Kalamazoo police officers quickly and violently carried out a forced eviction on empty land in the city's Eastside neighborhood.

K was tackled from behind by an officer while trying to advocate for a nearby family. During the arrest K- who was pregnant during the incident- suffered from fractures to their neck and spine, and is currently immobilized in a neck brace for the next 6-8 months. Their GoFundMe is below.\*

[gofundme.com/f/help-an-indigenous-mother-of-3-with-med-bills](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-an-indigenous-mother-of-3-with-med-bills)

\*To hear a full-length interview with K about their experiences and a broader discussion of Socialist organizing, check out the "Media Cyphers Kalamazoo" podcast Ep. 33- link included in your email.

# Red-Baiting in Ottawa County- The Same Old Story

*Andy Argo- SPMI Chair*

In the recent mid-term elections across the state there were a significant number of candidates who ran and won on platforms of eliminating "critical race theory," slandering the LGBTQ community, bucking against pandemic era restrictions, and other pieces of a right-wing laundry list that are as alarming as they are familiar.

No where was this more apparent than in Ottawa County, where reactionary candidates on the "Ottawa Impact" slate- running on the familiar 'culture war' tropes of the right- made sweeping changes. Among them was shuttering and firing of all staff in the county's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and adopting a new motto, "Where Freedom Rings," saying the old one was used to "promote the divisive, Marxist ideology of the Race Equity movement."

It is worth pausing to look more closely at how these individuals are invoking "Marxism" and why. As is "Propaganda 101" for the right (and much of the pro-capitalist liberal class) calling something "Marxism," "Communism," or "Socialism" is shorthand for whatever is bad or the 'villain of the week' for reactionary propagandists. While it may be fun sport on the internet to ridicule such sources for completely misunderstanding all of these terms, it is worth reckoning in a serious way that the misunderstanding IS the point.

We know our definitions- Marxism is a critical analysis of capitalism and workers struggles materially through history, Socialism is about workers "seizing the means of production" (or having direct democratic control of their workplaces and communities), Communism is an imagined goal of a "moneyless, stateless, classless society." Stripped of the decades of effort to transform these into empty scare words all of these are ideas that most people would agree with.

Reactionaries like the Ottawa County board, who have allied themselves with the capitalist system and the ongoing U.S. colonial project, use terms like "Marxism" not only to signal 'evil and bad' to those in their constituency who have been coached all their lives to believe as such- but to muddy the waters and bring about confusion towards any alternatives to the system they champion.

Champions of capitalism within the Democratic Party are also painted by these propagandists as "Marxists" and "Communists." To one who knows what Marxism and Communism actually are claiming that politicians who rake in corporate donations and frequently use their power to discipline workers and crush the mildest of reforms is absurd on its face. For the worker who hasn't been educated on what these concepts actually are, however, it is effective in turning them off from wanting to engage with concepts that are- in truth- literally about how to organize themselves against the ruling class (or, perhaps we should say, the 'elites').

Much like the reactionaries of yesteryear would wave signs saying things like "Race Mixing is Communism," so too are they doing the same thing today in their declarations of calling rather innocuous racial equity programs a devious leftist plot. That said, there is an important truth to divine here in that "preventing the races from mixing" has been- and still is- a key tactic of the ruling class in preventing the type of worker solidarity that creates strong unions, movements, and revolutionary potential.

We also shouldn't forget the role of liberals in defanging popular advancements in social justice by stripping them of their class content. "Identity politics" was created by queer African-American Marxist women at the Combahee Collective to explain the intersections of capitalist oppression and marginalized groups. The Democratic Party has largely co-opted the concept to push for a more diverse ruling class that "looks like America." More than a right-wing pundit calling every single grievance and annoyance in your life Communism, the assumption that Socialism is simply about making the current oppressive system more diverse is effective in making some working people dismissive (and for white workers in particular helps pave the path towards fascist grievance politics).

One thing the right is NOT wrong about- Socialism is on the rise. And we must do our part to pierce through these deliberately encouraged misunderstandings- talk about the history of worker's struggles in the U.S. and around the world, explain what these terms actually mean. The younger generations, collectively traumatized by endless war and neoliberal decline, are particularly receptive. Have that conversation, recommend a book or documentary. You may just change a life- and change our world for the better.