

From: Norm Diamond norm@lclark.edu

Subject: potential organizational affiliate?

Date: January 5, 2019 at 12:23 PM

To: Marcus Widenor mrwide@uoregon.edu, Jim Cook jmelvincook@gmail.com, Ron Verzuh rverzuh@shaw.ca, Laurie Mercier lmercier@vancouver.wsu.edu

ND

Old People's Socialist League

New Organization Seeks Active Members

I am writing to announce the formation of the Old People's Socialist League (OPSL). The OPSL will accept all socialists over the age of 65 as members in good standing, although if you find standing more than five minutes at a stretch as painful as I do, you may sit instead. On the other hand, if sitting aggravates your sciatica, by all means, stand, or lie down.

You ask: Why the Old People's Socialist League? Isn't socialism for everyone? Yes. Recently I joined DSA, overjoyed that for the first time in my life, socialism was "in." But when I looked around at my first chapter meeting, two hundred strong, I realized that Everyone Was Younger Than Me.

Don't get me wrong, I applaud the youth who, confronting climate change, college debt and precarious work, racialized police violence, and neoliberalism morphing into fascism, figured out that the answer to all these developments is democratic socialism.

But my problem is that unlike the young people, I'll be dead by the time the Pacific Ocean laps at my front door; college was many decades ago and cost me a few kopecks only, and the police don't care about my DWO (Driving While Old).

As for fascism, personally I'm too old for street fighting. I'm so old that I can't write the words "street fighting" without the Rolling Stones' "Street Fighting Man" starting up in my head (note for note due to the number of times I've heard it), and a good thing it's in my head, too, because if you played it for me on your record player I wouldn't hear it so good. I also automatically recall how the English Marxist Tariq Ali took Mick Jagger to a huge demonstration against the Vietnam War in London in 1968 that turned violent, giving birth, like a new world from the ashes of the old, to the song. Which reminds me of the demo I was at protesting Lyndon Johnson's appearance at a fancy dinner inside the Century Plaza Hotel, when the cops rioted and beat hell out of all the young women who had carefully been shepherded to the front lines under the brilliant theory that "cops won't beat up chicks." Hmm. Where was I?

Ah yes. The bylaws of the OPSL lay out our generation's priorities in the fight:

First, Preserving and Expanding Social Security.

Second, Medicare for All.

Third, I Don't Remember For Sure (but I see from my notes that handrails and a universal remote may play significant roles)

Fourth, Senior Discounts are Important Too (but not that important).

At the same time, we will not ignore the young people's issues. Solidarity is central to socialism, and we will reach across the generations to the extent possible.

To roll back climate change, we old socialists will together drive our Priuses, in a big clump, extremely slowly and erratically in the left lanes of the freeway, our turn indicators flashing mile after mile. We already drive like this as individuals, so it shouldn't be too hard to organize as a group. But we'll do it with greater mindfulness, inspired by the OPSL. This will create an incentive for overpaid tech startup employees fuming in BMWs behind us to seek other modes of transport and wean them from carbon-based energy sources.

College debt? We didn't have any, due to taxing the hell out of the rich and corporations back then. We'll put that back in place, and we will all benefit from this new version of the Robin Hood story, including, although they won't believe it, the bourgeoisie themselves (see the New Deal, when Roosevelt saved capitalism, and ingrate capitalists thought he was a red). The government will pay off everyone's college debt, and public higher education will be free again.

Precarious jobs everywhere you look? You should see me walking from my house to the corner store—I'll show you precarious! Seriously, repatriating trillions of dollars stashed in overseas tax havens and instituting a wealth tax will provide a giant pool of public capital we can deploy to create a Green New Deal, with millions of jobs for young people in the transition to a sustainable economy.

Finally, fascism. Those among us who have faithfully kept up with our geriatric aerobics programs will join with young antifa fighters in street confrontations with the fascists, taunting and provoking them with superior epithets born of our long experience, while carefully keeping younger and larger comrades between us and the Nazis.

The Old People's Socialist League will not neglect the construction of a new culture for the New Person who will arise out of the transition to a democratic socialist world. We will lift our voices in specially written revolutionary anthems. Of course we will not sing these songs in the original Yiddish, because to reach audiences today they have to be in English or Spanish, as well as reproduced through the latest technologies, like CDs.

Finally, we will improve upon past tactics to build the movement. Thanks to the great sex that our parents had right after World War II, there are a lot of us, and we are getting no younger ourselves. Most of us have led, all things considered, pretty good lives, or as good as they might be under capitalism. When future public protests could use an attention-getting device, the OPSL will contribute our bodies to a "die-in." You've seen these at environmental, anti-war and anti-nuclear protests through the years, where people all lie down at the same to illustrate what it would look like

when a catastrophe occurs. Only in this case we actually will die. What better way to go?

This tactic will require filling in a form, provided by the OPSL Subcommittee for Responsible Die-Ins, affirming that you have taken care of final business, including having your will notarized, your living trust is in place, the power of durable attorney transferred to the most thoughtful of your children, and leaving your earthly possessions to the movement.

Old Socialists, unite! You have nothing to lose but your membership in that good-for-nothing AARP, which is what we say after eating soup. I hope my call to action does not fall upon deaf ears.