

Workshops of the Whole: CPUSA Convention 2019:
**Digest of Table Discussion: Special Oppression and the Struggle for Equality and
Democracy**

II. “In your club and district, is there a way to work to deepen the fight for equality in any of the following areas:

- protect and expand voting rights**
- turn out the vote**
- defend the rights of women**
- defend the rights of immigrants**

Please share your experiences everyone could consider trying and new approaches your club and district could consider implementing.”

Building the Party

—Defending rights means forming solidarity with affected organizations. We should aim for long-term coalition building and engage in direct actions of support for issues like reproductive rights, anti-ICE, police accountability, child care

—We need to build capacity. We all need to do what we can. Leaders/active members are stretched thin. Increased club engagement means increased capacity for solidarity work. **To increase membership as each member to bring new guest to each meeting, and so on, and so on...**

—Learned hopelessness: convince people of changes that can be made outside elections to encourage people not to give up. Show examples of the differences coalitions have made. Don't reduce people's struggles to any one area. We need to hold more than just election work. **Learn from the community before coming in with ideas.**

—Knocking on doors and talking about issues was what got recognition as having the most significant impact.

—Showing up for protests, community events or other public activities of specially oppressed groups is a simple but vitally important part of building relationships with such groups. Just showing up isn't all that you should aim to do, but when you do show up you're doing more than most people.

Protect and expand voting rights, turn out the vote

—Connect with established organizations such as League of Women Voters to Get out the vote. Also campus-based voter organizations, churches, NAACP, labor movement, those who worked on local issues that we support. Find out who are the active organizations in your area.

*engage with people where they gather: civic organizations, community organizations. For example, barbershop: while they get their hair cut, try to convince them to vote.

—Help people figure out how to do absentee and early voting. Encourage them to vote early.

—Use a step-by-step process to expand voting:

1. Produce a handout explaining voting rights and the importance of voting. Try to make it multilingual. Or use a questionnaire: what are their concerns?
2. Do a workshop! So canvassers know what they're doing!
3. Make sure people are registered (correctly). Go door to door, take both issue-based and registration materials. If they've moved, need to re-register!
4. Turn out the vote.

*More “souls to polls”: actually driving people to polls

*Unions used to carry elections. Now a void in turnout organizations needs to be filled.

*Organizations that have vans, take people to polling place. Lyft offered free rides to polling places. Publicize people's transportation options.

*Be a registration driver: you can be certified online.

—Problem with a lot of the young folk is they wouldn't register. “I don't do that.” How do we let them know that they got something vested in it.

—People need to be interested to want to vote. Help people understand what is at stake. Encourage people to trust the process enough to participate. Also, have candidates that are inspiring.

*Education on history/revolutionary aspect of voting

*Relate to specific struggles: how can elections impact people personally

*Organize around issues rather than candidates or parties

—People vote at the county level and people need information about how the county works

—Use ballot initiatives and pick issues that have broad support (Fight for \$15)

—Encourage our members to become election workers, precinct captains, or poll watchers. More of us are needed to prevent bias and errors from tipping elections to the Republican side.

—Organize unions to be engaged in voting rights. It needs to be tangible. They may not see the difference between Democrat and Republican. If people see how voting helps the union, it can help. Solidify the message of “workers united.”

—Organize or attend a candidates' night

—Think outside the box: game nights, comedy shows can be settings for electoral activism

—Registration work at work; addresses are given to union organizers

—Focus on:

*youth voting

*Af-Am and Latinx neighborhoods

*people who were discouraged in 2016

*blue collar voters who would vote for Bernie but voted for Trump

*nontraditional, “low-propensity” voters. Identify those who have been marginalized or excluded from the voting process. Work within established organizations to register them.

—Go to county auditors: get voting records: organize files to see voting trends, who hasn’t voted. Get the list and find (by zip) the non-registered and register them.

—Make calls to possibly “purged” voters

—Talk to youth, especially in high school, and elders: stay involved. Correct the myth that incarceration means loss of vote. Put requirements on local (club) website.

*Use cultural events to raise money to expunge record of ex-felons

—Use PW to pass out in stores, on the train, and bring up voting

—Do poetry workshop/cultural outreach with high school seniors, senior centers, in prisons: voting rights and democracy education. Let prospective voters know the sacrifice folks made to get rights to vote!

—Raise awareness of things like HR 1 that did pass to combat voter suppression. Find out successes and amplify them.

—Field our own candidates for local and state offices; combat lack of representation of our people and our interests. Dem party, top-down control, squeezes out grassroots. We need to run campaigns on our own terms.

—Promote a national campaign parallel to our 1932 fight against Jim Crow. Use a solid idea to rally voters: single payer health care; nationalizing energy.

—People may say: “Things don’t change. No unions, Republicans just lie. If you vote, nothing really happens.” Help them see it as part of a larger struggle. You have to be involved to get any of the other things you’re working for.

*Don’t let folks discount voting. It is fundamental to guarantee this right. Long struggle to get it.

—We have almost a reverse totalitarian system where people are divided from the struggle, “Me, me, me,” don’t care about community. That’s why they gravitate to anarchy. Voting is contrary to hyper-individualism. Make it more cool: video or podcast: Voting & Us—Gov & Us? **Do a Specter podcast on elections. This is something you do that matters, not a waste of time.**

—Participatory budgeting (via local organizations) can promote a feeling of connection.

—Focus on local issues to drive registration (i.e. tenant rights). Pass ordinances steadily locally to make a difference. Builds community, then can have more strength.

—Cities are easier to work in, but we must engage rural areas

—Pamphlet from NY district: new laws made possible by election victory: what are they? What do they mean? What's next?

—Work with ward organizations, other organizations who approve or endorse initiatives. Formal process. Direct communications with campaign.

—We need more Spanish language materials

—Advocate the expansion of polling places and accessible places. No police stations. Have polling places in businesses or churches that are immigrant friendly

—Revisit the registration process: re-institute same day registration; push to have election day as national holiday, or on a weekend; easy registration at DMV

—Fight gerrymandering and voter I.D. laws; contact your congressperson. Start a letter writing campaign to congress members.

—Fight against felon disenfranchisement.

—Work to abolish the electoral college

Defend the rights of women

—Very important for the party to facilitate spaces centered on oppressed groups, be that women, ethnic minorities, youth, LGBTQ, etc. Consciously avoid white male centrism. Women bear brunt of struggle: ensure they have opportunity to speak at leftist meetings.

—In our clubs: ask women to chair. Don't make a separation between "intellectual" work and organizational/administrative work. We need more women in the party and no division of tasks between women and men.

—Link Party centenary to centenary of women's suffrage

—Black and brown women are usually left behind. They need to feel included. Intersectionality: class, feminism, race

—Fight for right to childcare, maternity leave, paid family leave, free pre-school, daycare

—Fight regressive laws and/or regulations that punish women (i.e. cut benefits for their children)

—Just because abortion is legal does not mean that all women have access to abortion, especially in rural areas.

—Codify Roe vs. Wade in the event of Supreme court overturn. Bring up in primaries.

—More men should talk about abortion rights.

—Ask people are they aware of the attack on women's rights

—Canvass with Planned Parenthood

—Assist with established services, like Planned Parenthood, patient assistance, escorts. Connect with women's groups to determine their needs.

—Educate people about the powerful changes that came about from more women being in office

—Give people resources to know their rights and how to protect themselves.

—On voting, women have more difficult conditions because they have both work and home responsibilities and usually they have more precarious labor conditions. Promote the exercise of electoral rights.

—Traditional concepts of masculinity have changed. This has removed barriers

—Unionize predominantly “female” occupations: nursing, teaching, caretakers

—Reach out to local groups. Support local ballot initiatives and women candidates (we helped elect Denver’s first Latina queer socialist)

—Organize efforts at local detention centers. We need treatment programs rather than incarceration.

*Locally, Illinois passed a bill to prevent private prisons, started as a direct action and was organized. Labor organizing can get work done in a wider context.

—Focus on young women, do outreach to broaden women’s groups and bring men into the movement for women’s rights—it’s just and strengthens the working class.

Defend the rights of immigrants

—Boycott citizen question on census.

—Help provide access to lawyers or legal aid

—Initiatives to prohibit police from detaining immigrants, such as those in Tucson, AZ

—Provide information about current immigrant rights

*Make workshops to inform immigrants about their rights.

*Tax forms also used as a trap for ICE/immigrant deportation

—OCAD: Organizing Committees Against Deportation

—Telling stories, getting personal accounts out. showing that this is more common than many think.

—Immigrant task force rapid response team gets notification so they can witness and document (So. Bay)

—Engage children of immigrants; use their status to protect undocumented.

—Show up: let them know you care

—We protest quarterly at Aurora ICE Detention Facility, guard Churches for Sanctuary, immigrant members of Party in Colorado.

—ICE should be abolished. It has been said that immigrants are taking jobs which is not true. There were no jobs before they got here. It is our job to destroy this myth.

- Issue statement of solidarity with undocumented people if Trump orders roundups
- Use direct action and mass demos to stop deportations.
- Speed up naturalization process

- Clarify and simplify what rights we are fighting for and why
- Join groups in your area that work with immigrant/women's rights. More rights helps all people.
- Fight to expand voting rights to all immigrants in local elections.
- Immigration court, needs same protections as criminal court/rest of judicial system, especially translation rights
- Over the long term, advocate for the removal of borders