

MiARA Newsletter

August 2017

Three Dead as White Nationalist Rally Sparks Violence

On August 12, 2017, white supremacists donning KKK gear and holding Nazi flags staged a hate-filled rally in Charlottesville, VA igniting violence and resulting in three deaths.

One of those killed was 32-year-old Heather Heyer. Friends described Ms. Heyer as one who always sided with the disenfranchised and as one who was always moved by the world's injustices. One friend said, "Heather stood against any kind of discrimination."

Ms. Heyer was hit by a car that plowed into people who were protesting the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville. The driver of the car, James Alex Fields Jr. of Maumee, Ohio, a purported white supremacist who had travelled to the rally, was arrested, and charged with second-degree murder, three counts of malicious wounding and failing to stop at the scene of an accident that resulted in death.

In an incident unrelated to the car crash, two Virginia State police troopers who were monitoring the rally to assist law enforcement

officers were killed when their helicopter went down. The officers killed were Lt. H. Jay Cullen, 48, and Trooper-pilot Berke M.M. Bates, 40, both of Virginia.

Ms. Heyer's mother, Susan Bro, spoke with passion and eloquence at Heather's Memorial Service. Ms. Bro decided to hold a public service to amplify her daughter's message of anti-discrimination.

Quoting from a Facebook post of her daughter's that has now been shared more than 26,000 times, Ms. Bro read "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention."

Ms. Bro called on the mourners to take action on behalf of their values as had her daughter, who worked as a waitress and a paralegal at a law firm.

Her passionate plea rang out again when she remarked, "They tried to kill my child to shut her up. Well guess what—you just magnified her."

Ms. Bro went on to say, "it's not all about forgiveness. The truth is, we are going to have our differences, we are going to be angry with each other. But let's not channel that anger into hate."

As union members, we know that strength comes from unity and from making our voices heard for social justice. We must stand together against the threat coming from the extreme Alt-Right. We must never forget the sacrifice so many Americans and veterans have made to the ideals of liberty, democracy, and compassion for all.

Heather Heyer should be remembered and honored for her courage and her desire to make this world a better place for all people.

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AFT Leaders Respond to Hearing on Gary B. v. Snyder Federal Court Case

A September ruling is expected in the groundbreaking case of Gary B. v. Snyder. In 2016, seven Detroit school children, with support from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), filed this class action suit against Governor Rick Snyder and state education officials in the Eastern District of Michigan, charging that the state failed to provide students their constitutional right to literacy.

AFT President Randi Weingarten, AFT Michigan President David Hecker, and Detroit Federation of Teachers President Ivy Bailey issued the following joint statement after the case was heard on August 12th:

“The pattern and practice of disinvestment in our schools is staggering and betrays our obligation to provide all children the well-resourced public schools they need and deserve. Thirty-six states are still spending less on public schools than they did before Great Recession, and the city of Detroit offers the most striking evidence of what happens to children when we defund our schools.

Detroit’s teachers are committed to doing everything they can to help the children of Detroit succeed, but we need investment in our children, our schools and our profession. We stand with the children and families bringing this suit because we can no longer tolerate unsafe and unhealthy learning conditions; outdated or nonexistent learning materials; and inadequate investment in the capacity, professional development, and recruitment and retention of Detroit Teachers, while at the same time, unaccountable charter schools drain even more resources from public schools.

We are fighting for safe and healthy schools, learning materials that engage kids, and the training and support we need to improve our craft.”

MiARA Activist Spotlight Dr. James Sockolosky

Dr. James Sockolosky is a true Michigander. He was born and raised in Detroit, and his first job was a public-sector summer job for the city of Detroit’s Department of Parks and Recreation. At the same time, he was earning a degree from Wayne State University.

After graduating from Wayne State, Jim attended the University of Michigan where he received his Doctorate in Dental Science. After graduation in 1970, he became a Wayne County employee and a member of the Government Administrator’s Association (GAA). He spent most of his career with Wayne County as the dentist at the PRESCAD Health Center in Smith Chapel A.M.E. Church in Inkster Michigan. Jim retired in February 2002.

Since his retirement, Jim has worked in private practice in Westland, Michigan and has become active in Wayne County retiree groups. He attends monthly AFSCME Retiree Sub-Chapter 38 Executive Board meetings, followed by general membership meetings, monthly meetings of the Wayne County Employees Retirees Club (WCER), and bi-monthly meetings of the GAA retirees group. This is Jim’s sixth year as president of the WCER Club where his duties include running meetings and sharing responsibility for the newsletter. He often receives calls asking for information and assistance, directing people to the proper resources when needed.

Jim devotes part of his time to helping watch over and protect retire pension funds and health insurance provisions with a few other retirees. He attends pertinent court hearings and Wayne County Commission meetings. As well as having a personal stake in these issues, Jim is concerned about and his fellow retirees, and working hard to fight pension cuts and to allow them to maintain their standard of living.

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Doctor James Sockolosky and his wife Janet. James is on the frontlines fighting to help seniors fight pension cuts.

In addition to retiree activities, Jim and his wife Janet are active members of their church where he participates in renovation and maintenance projects with the building and grounds committee and takes care of the memorial garden.

His family has always been important to Jim. He and Janet enjoy spending time with their three children and their families as well as with his mother. Jim and Janet feel quite fortunate to have extended family members living nearby.

AFSCME is proud to have Dr. James Sockolosky representing their union as MiARA August 2017 Activist Spotlight. His work on behalf of his fellow retirees is truly appreciated by all.

Celebrate Labor Day Monday, September 4

Labor Day has always been very special for Michigan. It celebrates the achievements of union workers. Highlighting the day is the march in Downtown Detroit. Be a part of the celebration; join the parade. Check with your union to see their plans for this special day for American workers and their unions.

State Board of Canvassers Okays Gerrymandering Petition to Go Forward

The state Board of Canvassers has approved a petition to change the state constitution to create an independent citizen commission to draw political boundaries, taking the role away from the legislature. If enough signatures are collected to put the proposal on the ballot, voters will have an opportunity to end gerrymandering in Michigan.

The group behind the petition, Voters Not Politicians, said it hopes to start collecting signatures at once. Katie Fahey, the group's president, told a Detroit Free Press reporter, "We are very excited to go and get out in the field."

The group plans to take a nonpartisan approach to ensure that changes in how Michigan chooses its district boundaries are supported by both parties.

According to the Free Press, despite winning a majority of votes in the last three state house elections, Democrats won only 43 percent and 46 percent of the seats, due at least in part to gerrymandering. (*Detroit Free Press* 08-17-17).

MiARA Executive Board

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General Membership Meeting

Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans

Featuring Keynote Speaker
Jim Shake
UAW Senior Actuarial Consultant

Update on Social Security Insurance issues
If you have concerns or questions, Jim can help you find answers.

Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017

Time: 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Where: UAW Region 1A.
9650 Telegraph Rd.
Taylor, MI 48180

RSVP: Beckie Bridgewater 313-926-5640
rbridge@uaw.net

Lunch and beverages provided