



Kshama's and Moore's strong showing in these elections is important because of the size and significance of the cities where they took place. Seattle has a population of 650,000 with 3.4 million in the metropolitan area, while Minneapolis has a population 400,000 with 3.3 million in its metropolitan area. Seattle is a major Pacific Rim city, tied economically to the U.S. West Coast, Canada, and Asia, while Minneapolis is a major economic hub of the Midwest, second only to Chicago. Consequently the socialists' strong showing in these cities is a matter of national significance.

Why did Sawant and Moore do so well? Both are personable individuals and well respected activists in their communities who built strong campaign organizations. Both candidates raised issues of concern not only to their local constituencies, but to the country as a whole. Sawant, for example, called for raising the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15, for taxes on millionaires and corporations to raise funds for jobs, education and social services, unionization of low-wage workers, affordable housing, an end to racial profiling and police brutality, a moratorium on deportations and citizenship rights for undocumented immigrants, and adequate funds for public schools with lower class sizes.

Sawant and Moore talked not only about immediate local issues, but also about the need to replace capitalism with socialism. Sawant's site declared, "The only solution is to fight to change this system, and replace the profit-driven, exploitative system of capitalism with a democratic socialist society. Join us in the struggle for a socialist alternative, to liberate the world from poverty, exploitation, and war."

One might speculate that the persistent economic and social crisis in the United States since the crash of 2008, accompanied by government austerity programs, has finally led to a political response. Certainly there are neighborhoods in both cities with high unemployment and hundreds of foreclosed homes, but Seattle and Minneapolis are not cities such as devastated Detroit. Both Minneapolis and Seattle have strong, diverse economies with unemployment and poverty rates far below the national average. Seattle's unemployment rate is only 4.7 percent, and so is that of Minneapolis, while the national unemployment rate is 7.2 percent, and Detroit has a rate of 18.8 percent. Seattle and Minneapolis, while they have their problems, are among the better-off American cities.

What then could account for the response the Socialist Alternative candidates received?

Demographics and culture play a role. Both Seattle and Minneapolis are both considered to be progressive cities that have a tolerant and liberal political culture. They also have diverse economies and growing high-tech industries that attract well educated young workers: a lot of geeks and nerds. Both cities made a recent CNBC list of cities most hospitable to young people because of their green spaces, their diversity, their entertainment venues, and "indy culture," that is, one encouraging to independent creative artist.

What the Sawant and Moore campaigns may reveal is that the economic and social crisis explain less about the success of their campaigns than the changing attitudes of younger Americans who have become more critical of government and the corporations, more open to racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and more concerned about environmental issues and the quality of life for themselves and for others. What we may be witnessing is the development of working-class consciousness together with the development of an anti-capitalist counter-culture. We saw something similar in the 1970s when a radical social movement and a counter-cultural movement developed simultaneously. We hope that these developing trends find expression in more militant social movements and more such socialist political campaigns.

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