

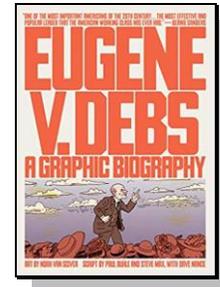
# DSA Fund

The Democratic Socialists of America Fund

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit dedicated to political education and engagement

## EUGENE V. DEBS STUDY GUIDE

This Study Guide is intended to encourage individual and group discussion of the broader subjects raised in *Eugene V. Debs, a Graphic Biography*, available for purchase [here](#). Our purpose is to help make the study of Socialist history popular again, within DSA and beyond. Discussion questions for each chapter follow:



### THE RISE OF EUGENE V. DEBS:

1. How did young Gene Debs grow into becoming a union activist, and how did he come to socialism?
2. What is the role of the outstanding personality within the socialist movement, then or now?
3. How does participation in electoral political change that role?

#### **Short Readings**

- Gene Debs and the American Railroad Union [here](#)
- Labor in the Gilded Age [here](#)

### DEBSIAN SOCIALISM:

1. How did the Socialist Party create a wider public following and an electoral voting base?
2. How did it build influence within the labor movement?
3. How can we create that today, with the changes in media, politics and labor?

#### **Short Readings**

- Debs and the Industrial Workers of the World [here](#)
- The socialist paper *Appeal to Reason* sold a half-million copies [here](#)

### TRIUMPH—AND THE EDGE OF TRAGEDY:

1. What was the impact on socialism of the changing cultural attitudes known as “Modernism” or “Bohemianism,” during the 1910s?

2. How did Socialists react to mass strikes and demonstrations during that period?
3. What are the major cultural shifts today and what are the expressions of mass insurgency? How do we act upon, and within, them to build the movement?

#### **Short Readings**

- Read *The Masses*, a major radical cultural magazine of the period [here](#)
- Bread and Roses, the Lawrence, MA textile strike of 1912 [here](#)

#### **MARTYR DEBS:**

Repression decimated the socialist movement while internal divisions splintered its energies and demoralized its membership. How can we deal with these kinds of difficulties now?

#### **Short Readings**

- Debs on trial in Canton Ohio 1918 [here](#)
- The Red Scare of 1917 [here](#)

#### **THE DEBS LEGACY—NORMAN THOMAS, MICHAEL HARRINGTON, BERNIE SANDERS:**

1. Just as socialists struggled to remain relevant in a politics changed first by consumerism and then by the New Deal appeal of the Democratic Party, how can today's socialists balance the desire and real need of our constituents to win reforms with our own wish to maintain an independent program?
2. Constituencies to which we want to appeal are sometimes divided within themselves on such issues as abortion, charter schools, school security, affirmative action, and even climate change. How should we deal with these divisions as socialists?
3. The DSA that emerged in 1981 was starkly different from the Socialist Party of 1912. How can today's DSA find the ways to build a diverse and sustainable organization?
4. Discuss the role of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as representative of Democratic Socialism in Congress.

#### **Short Readings**

- *Why Not Norman Thomas? The 1932 Campaign*, from *The Nation* [here](#)
- *Michael Harrington, an American Socialist*. From *In These Times*, 1989 [here](#)
- Biography of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez [here](#)
- Basic history of US Socialism from 1825 to 2019 [here](#)