

# Ice Cream, Anarchy & Forgotten Workers

**Detroit anti-authoritarians remember Sacco and Vanzetti with ice cream social, assist with one-of-a-kind food-sharing event**

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2019

In late August, a sizable crowd gathered in a downtown Detroit park well past its glory days to eat chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry ice cream...and learn about Sacco and Vanzetti.

The event, known as the Sacco and Vanzetti Ice Cream Social, honored the memory of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian-born anarchists framed for allegedly robbing and killing a paymaster and security guard in South Braintree, Massachusetts in April 1920.

Convicted because of their politics and immigrant status, despite substantial evidence of their innocence, Sacco and Vanzetti inspired a movement of millions of people around the world who demanded their release.

The two anarchists were murdered by the state of Massachusetts in the electric chair on August 23, 1927.

This year's ice cream social was sponsored by local anarchists and members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Detroit branch. It was the resumption of a tradition that began in 2002 to remember the two Italian-Americans on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their execution.

An event organizer tells the *Fifth Estate*, "A friend and I decided to restart the annual ice cream social after attending a Sacco and Vanzetti commemoration event in Boston last year."

"We've tried a number of things over the years—a movie showing, a dance party—but the ice cream social has always worked the best," he continues. "For some reason, people want to know the reason why we are serving them ice cream. It really sparks their curiosity about Sacco and Vanzetti."

This year's ice cream social dovetailed with the bimonthly "Sundays in Cass Park with our Friends and the Forgotten Worker" free picnic put together by a coalition that includes the Wobbly Kitchen, a local IWW branch institution that provides food for workers in need and for other events and rallies.

"The ice cream social and food in general is a great way of getting people together," says Jim Rehberg of the IWW kitchen group. The execution of Sacco and Vanzetti represents "the murderous intentions by the powers that be to keep anyone in the struggling class discredited and unable to have their say in this system."

"They were tried and convicted because they were immigrants and anarchists. Their political beliefs were outside of the norms and unwanted," Rehberg continues. "Many of us in this American system of government are outside of the norms and increasingly are being censured, silenced, jailed, forced into debt and corralled by the rule of law. Sacco and Vanzetti are two of the many inspirations for the struggling class."

Sundays in the Park is a story worth telling in its own right. The food-share event has the feel of an old-time soup kitchen. Every other week, it attracts a lively crowd of mostly working class people, some of them homeless, for tasty meals with both meat and non-meat options.

A grassroots group called the Detroit Underground Initiative kicked off the bi-weekly meals in 2011 as an act of solidarity with a Food Not Bombs chapter that had been arrested for sharing food with the hungry and homeless. Not long afterwards, the Wobbly Kitchen joined in to support their efforts.

Over the years, the Sunday meals have attracted a confederation of volunteers, supporters and participants that includes members of several different unions, neighborhood residents and others in the area from a variety of different backgrounds.

The community around the event has been so strong that some local area residents displaced by sports-stadium-related gentrification in the area take long bus rides back to their former neighborhood to be part of the event.

The bi-weekly meals program is supported by contributions and an annual Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser prepared by the Wobbly Kitchen.

To make sure “no one is confused or misled into thinking we are just a happy band of volunteers who like to work for free and give food away,” the Kitchen’s Facebook page (The Wobbly Kitchen (Detroit)) explicitly cites the Preamble to the IWW Constitution’s fiery opening:

“The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.’

“Since hunger and want are found in abundance in the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan, we have little choice but to share what we can to ease the burden of those Forgotten Workers.”

Sundays in the Park demonstrates that solidarity and mutual aid can bring people together to form a caring, supporting community.

Both the meals and the annual ice cream social also highlight the power of memory, how remembering the sacrifices of those who preceded us and acknowledging the forgotten contributions of those now living alongside us can provide strength and insight as we undergo the difficult journey towards a liberated future.

It would be amazing if next year there were Sacco and Vanzetti ice cream socials, not just in Detroit, but in cities around the globe. To remember our past, is to remember what we are capable of doing once more!

Viva Sacco and Vanzetti! Viva the Forgotten Worker!

Search “Sundays in Cass Park” in Facebook for schedules of food events.

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# fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #402, Winter 2019

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