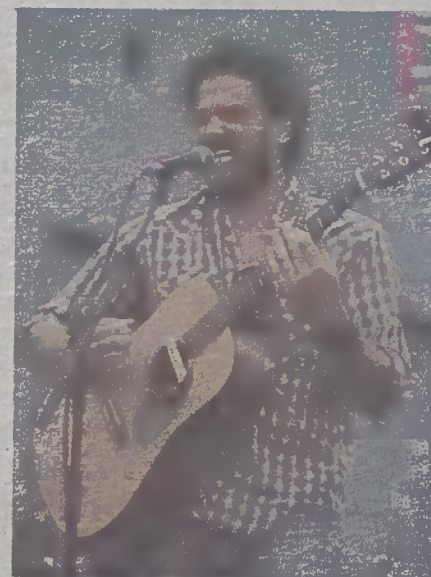


OPINION



Supporters of Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders get together at New Mountain to rally, share stories and perform music to unite the people.



Feeling the

B E R N

MATT JOYCE
Contributor

This past Sunday, I joined hundreds of others at the New Mountain AVL Bernie Bash to support the presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders.

People came together to enjoy the musical talents of Free Radio, Josh Phillips, and the Fireside Collective, among others. They ate delicious food at Out of the Blue Peruvian Fusion Cuisine. They informed themselves on the new voting rules at the Democracy Now tent and registered to vote. The primary purpose, however, was Sanders.

Sanders says that he can't do it alone. He is simply the messenger representing the ideas he feels help everyone but the 1%.

I think what I like most about Sanders is he's changing what we expect in a politician. For too long, the strategy of establishment politicians has been to make the opponent look bad.

Sanders' strength is that he

doesn't need to run negative campaign ads - his ideas speak for themselves.

He focuses on issues such as raising the minimum wage to a livable wage and making corporations pay their fair share. He wants to end failed, racist mass-incarceration along with drug policies disproportionately affecting Black and Hispanic communities. Sanders also strives to end perpetual warfare, getting money out of politics to provide free college tuition to everyone.

His beliefs are also held by a majority of Americans.

For decades, people have had to choose between the lesser of two evils. There's been the perception that no matter who gets elected, nothing is ever really going to change. Sadly, young people have grown apathetic to a system that neither represents us nor the issues we care most about.

While I have sympathized with this apathy in the past,

Bernie Sanders is different. He has been running on a consistent platform for 30+ years. He isn't beholden to greedy corporations and reckless banks because he doesn't want, much less accept, their money. He speaks his mind freely and openly.

No one can deny his authenticity and genuine nature, whether or not they agree with his ideas. He only represents the American people and their collective interests. As a result, he is a threat to the system.

The corporate media, banks, corporations, establishment politicians - they all lose if Bernie changes the system that benefits them.

It's no secret this 1% disproportionately controls our country. The truth is, they are terribly scared of Bernie Sanders. Not because of him, but because of us. Bernie Sanders is a vessel for the American people.

He's the medium through which our voice has a place

in Washington, free from the corrupting influence of money. Only when informed citizens demand change from their politicians will anything get done.

When we the people elect leaders that only represent us, we have a larger voice in our democracy.

There's no denying our country faces mounting problems. Climate change, institutional racism, big money in politics and wealth inequality are issues that need to be tackled immediately.

We can't afford more empty rhetoric and more of the status quo, we need real change now.

I have been encouraged by the rise of Bernie Sanders in such a short time. A grassroots rise that has happened through the internet, through people like you and me - without the support of big money.

If you haven't done so already, I implore you to critically assess what Bernie Sanders represents (at feelthebern.org)