

“Austerity and all the hardship it causes has been sweeping this country since the Coalition Government came to power in 2010. Now we’re just months away from another General Election and the only ‘good’ that’s come from these unnecessary cuts is the movements that have come together to fight them and provide a platform for the ‘There is an alternative’ message. At the forefront of this movement has been The People’s Assembly Against Austerity, an initiative bringing together anti-austerity voices from across society, from trade unions and parties like the Green Party to grass roots campaigning groups.”

So writes Sahaya James - one of the national organisers for the Student Assembly Against Austerity (SAAA), Co-Convenor of South West Young Greens and a supporter of Stroud Against the Cuts. Please read the below article by her on the recent National Convention of the SAAA. If you are interested in local student activism please contact SATC via

[contact@stroudagainstcuts.co.uk](mailto:contact@stroudagainstcuts.co.uk)

or Sahaya directly via

[sjames416@gmail.com](mailto:sjames416@gmail.com)

“The student wing of the People’s Assembly, aptly named the Student Assembly Against Austerity (SAAA), was born in August 2013 and first assembled at a meeting in November of that year. Since then they have led the successful campaign against the sell-off of the student loan book and co-organised the 10,000 strong free education march on November 19<sup>th</sup>. In September last year they also launched the Student Manifesto 2015: fourteen democratically selected demands from the student movement made to politicians and political parties in the run-up to the General Election in May.

On Saturday 31st of January dozens of student activists from 22 campuses gathered at SOAS for the Student Assembly Against Austerity’s National Convention to decide and discuss an action plan for the student movement in the lead up to the General Election.

The Convention's packed agenda was centred around some of the Student Manifesto's key demands and opened with an inspiring panel entitled 'No more austerity!', which heard from a range of political figures such as Green Party leader Natalie Bennett, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Diane Abbot MP and activists such as Stand Up to Racism's Sabby Dhalu, SUArts President Shelly Asquith and Christy McMorrow, who has been leading a campaign for free education at Sheffield Uni.

Following on from this the day was filled with a series of interactive workshops on:

- · Fighting austerity on campus: for affordable housing & stopping course closures
- · Hardest hit: fighting cuts, bigotry and inequality
- · No racist scapegoating
- · We have a right to resist - #CopsOffCampus
- · FE students and the fightback – bring back EMA and defend youth services
- · For an ethical education – fossil free, no to war

The day ended with a closing session on 'Students and the General Election' that gave everyone an opportunity to feedback from the workshops they had attended, vote on the Student Assembly's Action Plan for the coming months and hear from a panel of incredible speakers, like comedian and activist Francesca Martinez, Stop the War Coalition's Lindsey German, Green Party Deputy Leader Shahrar Ali, the People's Assembly's Sam Fairbairn, NUS National Executive Aaron Kiely and Jonas from the Mexican student movement, who gave an emotional account of how the Mexican state 'disappeared' 43 students.

A recurring theme for many of the speakers was the ways in which racism and xenophobia had entered mainstream politics throughout Europe along with the austerity policies so many governments have adopted. With the rise of UKIP in this country, the importance of the upcoming Stand up to Racism demo on March 21<sup>st</sup> was emphasised repeatedly.

The Convention was a massive success with the majority of attendees being new activists, many of whom were very excited to take what they had learned back to their campuses, with dozens signing up to hold their own Student Question Time event with the support of the SAAA.&quot;

Sahaya James is one of the national organisers for the Student Assembly Against Austerity, Co-Convener of South West Young Greens and a supporter of Stroud Against the Cuts. If you are interested in local student activism please contact SATC via [contact@stroudagainstcuts.co.uk](mailto:contact@stroudagainstcuts.co.uk) or Sahaya directly via [sjames416@gmail.com](mailto:sjames416@gmail.com)