

# NETROOTS NATION

## RECAP: SAVING THE MIDDLE CLASS

☒ Sorry to be AWOL for most of Netroots Nation. bmaz says I've been offline for the last few days because we've been drunk and busy, but it seems to me I've just been incredibly busy for five days straight. There were a lot of conversations, but the overall theme seemed like a desperate conversation on saving the middle class.

Early in the week, I had some extended conversations with labor folks, including some interesting discussions about the UAW's plans to organize transplants—I hope to do an extensive follow-up on that.

On Thursday, I had the honor to be on a podium between Howard Dean and Russ Feingold, two of my political inspirations. Though the speakers of the night were probably a Pakistani and Zimbabwean woman talking about how important blogs are to giving women voices in oppressive societies. American Federation of Teachers President, Randi Weingarten, also gave a great talk.

On Thursday, I joined the ACLU and Julian Sanchez talking about all the surveillance we're under. I think we succeeded in scaring a lot of people.

I had conversations with a number of elected officials: Luis Gutierrez on immigration, Keith Ellison on saving the middle class, Sheldon Whitehouse on saving the middle class. Alan Grayson talked about what he's reading about our increasing inequality in Fed documents. While he's not elected, Jared Bernstein and I had a great talk about the MI auto bailout (and the fact Republican leaders are now claiming credit for results of stimulus in the midwest).

And then there were two more panels: how to beat

back the demonization of the working class, and how to make blogging sustainable. Not sure I know the answer to any of those questions.

I was so busy I didn't get to see many panels. But Van Jones had a great speech and the best panel I did sit in on featured Whitehouse and Dahlia Lithwick talking about the corporatization of the courts. Whitehouse emphasized how real people are increasingly losing the access to jury trials, something which our Constitution protects with far more urgency than corporations.

And I suppose bmaz is right that we spent a good deal of time, um, socializing. Barry Eisler—the author of the novel, *Inside Out*, that features a character named Marcy Wheeler—was one of the people I met for the first time this year. I thanked him for making it so Marcy Wheeler didn't get laid or killed. But I saw a bunch of old friends, too.

I'm sure I'll have more substantive stuff as I process the last several days. But processing it all is going to take a day or so yet.