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ELIZABETH WARREN?**

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The Socialist Case for Impeachment

A Contribution to the Debate in Democratic Socialists of America about How the Socialist Left Should Approach Impeachment

Philip Locker

“We’re going to impeach the motherf***er,” vowed Democratic Socialist Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib just hours after taking office in January. Her call expressed the rage of millions at Predator-in-Chief Donald Trump.

Tlaib’s battle cry also gave voice to activists’ accumulated frustration with the Democratic leadership’s refusal to act decisively against Trump’s blatant racism, barbaric caging of children and separation of families, destruction of the environment, trampling on women’s and LGBTQ rights, and attacks on the healthcare of millions.

Yet in late September, Nancy Pelosi and the Democratic leadership suddenly reversed course and launched an impeachment inquiry in response to Trump’s demand that Ukraine investigate Joe and Hunter Biden in exchange for US aid.

Over half of the House Democrats had already publicly declared they supported starting an impeachment inquiry before Pelosi’s U-turn. This reflected the pressure of the progressive Democratic base, as well as growing alarm among sections of the ruling class that Trump was damaging and destabilizing their system. With calls for impeachment surging after the Ukraine scandal erupted, Pelosi was faced with losing control over the process if she continued to stonewall.

Previously the foremost advocates for impeachment had been progressive Democrats, but now Pelosi and the establishment have firmly put themselves in the driver’s seat.

Impeachment, like all political questions, is a contested terrain. The Democratic establishment aims to frame it in a nationalistic fashion which furthers a hawkish foreign policy. They attack Trump on the grounds of defending “national security,” in other words, the interests of US imperialism.

The foreign policy establishment is outraged that Trump’s personal Ukraine agenda would undermine the ability of US imperialism to defend its interests against Russia. US military, diplomatic, and foreign policy elites were driven further into a frenzy when Trump recklessly withdrew US forces from Syria, betraying the Kurds and handing a victory to Iran, Russia, and the Assad regime.

Behind this is the larger agenda of the political establishment to return to the “normal” political order that persisted for decades before Trump. The fact that this so-called order triggered the disorder of Trump’s 2016 victory does not seem to enter into their calculations.

Ambivalence on the Left

This conservative agenda has led many on the radical left to adopt a deeply ambivalent attitude toward the current impeachment effort. The Democratic Socialists of America's elected leadership, the National Political Committee (NPC), took a negative stance on impeachment on October 8, arguing:

the impeachment process will [not] do anything to bring working class people into the political process.

...

...As the Democrats push for an impeachment, we believe it's essential that DSA continues to fight as and with the working class for demands that will shift power away from the 1%. We know that both Nancy Pelosi and Trump are a part of this ruling elite. Though they might find themselves at odds now, in the end they will both be against the demands of the working class and any platform that unites them. ...We will continue to fight against the whole capitalist class by campaigning for Medicare for All, a Green New Deal, improved public education for all ages, and Bernie Sanders.

It is absolutely correct to analyze the politics of impeachment in class terms. However, the NPC statement misses the forest for the trees.

Standing on the sidelines during the impeachment process only leaves the field to be dominated by the pro-capitalist forces in the Democratic Party. And it is this field to which tens of millions of working-class and middle-class people, desperate to see Trump gone, are turning.

Either the left will intervene on the actual terrain that exists, or it will be marginalized as long as impeachment dominates politics.

The socialist left needs to engage in this struggle from an independent socialist standpoint, striving to extend its political influence by linking the discussions around impeachment to a working-class agenda.

The DSA NPC stated, "Democrats holding power only responded to Trump's actions because [he] attempted to impact others in the capitalist class, particularly Joe Biden, the presumed Democratic front-runner for 2020."

There is more than a grain of truth in this analysis. The same dynamic was at play in the impeachment of Richard Nixon over his illegal surveillance of the Democratic Party. Nixon and previous presidents from both parties carried out far worse repression against the civil rights movement, anti-war movements, and socialist organizations like the Black Panthers. But Nixon crossed a line by targeting another ruling-class party.



However, our political revolution against the billionaire class should use every opportunity to mobilize working-class power and exploit divisions within the ruling elite. A left campaign should link impeachment with opposition to the policies that created Trump in the first place.

This can open the doors for much deeper changes such as Medicare for All, a Green New Deal, canceling student debt, tuition-free higher education, dismantling the racist mass incarceration system, and ending US wars and occupations.

We agree with the DSA NPC that we will not win these demands merely by impeaching Donald Trump, but impeachment can be an important stepping stone.

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Is Impeachment a Distraction?

Bhaskar Sunkara, editor of *Jacobin*, laid out the left case against impeachment in an article, “Impeachment is the wrong way to beat Trump”:

I find everything about Trump, from his demeanor to the human costs of his policies, to be reprehensible. But I fear squandering a historic opening to advocate for social reforms in exchange for some political theater.

However, getting rid of Trump as fast as possible is the most immediate, pressing need facing working people and the oppressed. In fact, it is the communities most under attack from Trump’s administration who most strongly support impeachment.



According to a Washington Post–Schar School poll conducted from October 1–6, 2019, 65% of women support the impeachment inquiry compared to 51% of men. The difference between white and non-white recipients was even starker, with 71% of non-white recipients supporting impeachment compared to 51% of white respondents.

Moreover, impeachment is now happening and is unavoidably dominating the political landscape. Either the left will intervene on the actual terrain that exists to fight to extend its influence, or it will be marginalized as long as impeachment dominates politics.

Max Sawicky hit the nail on the head in his October 3 response to Sunkara in *In These Times*: “If you’re trying to build a mass political organization while ignoring the political issue everybody in the country is talking about, you’re doing it wrong.” He continues, “a failure of the Left to take up impeachment leaves the field to lowest-common-denominator neocon/neoliberal politics, with which after all we are competing.”



In the debate in DSA earlier this year over endorsing Bernie Sanders, some activists similarly argued in an abstract manner to turn away from the real development of the Sanders campaign, instead mechanically focusing on their preferred forms of struggle. At that time we wrote:

the left-wing instinct that ‘the election is a distraction’ and that ‘the key is to build DSA instead’ is mistaken. No matter what DSA or the rest of the radical left does, we are not going to be able to alter the reality that US politics over the next two years will be dominated by the presidential election... Given these objective conditions, the question facing socialists is ‘not should this happen,’ but ‘what can we do to have an impact on how this is expressed?’ ...
...DSA should actively engage on the field of Bernie’s campaign with the aim of building support for socialist politics. Abstaining from this battle does not strengthen the support for radical politics—it means isolating ourselves from this critical site of struggle and radicalization.

Restoration or Rebellion?

In contrast to the establishment’s agenda to restore the pre-Trump status quo, the left should fight for impeachment to open the doors to radical change. We should combine the struggle to remove Trump with the positive alternative of electing Bernie Sanders to carry through a political revolution against the billionaire class.

The Democratic Party leadership wants to narrowly focus impeachment on the Ukraine affair. From a left-wing standpoint, Trump should be impeached for this brazen breach of democracy—and for a plethora of other abuses of power.



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The left should combine the struggle to remove Trump with fighting to elect Bernie.

Many on the left will be frustrated that Congress does not also impeach Trump for his many other crimes against working-class and oppressed people. But when the gangster Al Capone was brought down on tax evasion, few of his victims quibbled over the details of the charges. We too should welcome any opportunity to drive out the contemptible reactionary Donald Trump.

However, it is vital that the left does not trail behind the Democratic Party leadership and echo their conservative narrative. Instead, we need to forcefully make our own working-class, consistently democratic, socialist case for impeachment.

Left-wing representatives in Congress like the Squad (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, and Ayanna Pressley) and Bernie should use the impeachment process to skillfully expose the billionaires' agenda and promote working-class policies.

The left can put the whole system on trial by pointing out that Trump's self-dealing and corruption are only more brazen forms of the day-to-day nepotism of a rigged economic and political system. In contrast to the hypocrisy of the establishment, DSA, the Squad, and Bernie should call out the perfectly legal corruption of Hunter Biden profiting from his father's office and Joe Biden's failure to recuse himself from responsibilities that overlapped with his son's business deals in Ukraine and China.

The left should also point out that Trump's assertions of legal impunity, while unusually crude, are all too common in our two-tier legal system where Wall Street CEOs routinely escape any legal consequences for criminal conduct, while millions of people of color and poor people are over-policed and caught up in a brutal criminal justice system.

The left should not trail behind the Democratic Party leadership and echo their conservative narrative. Instead, we need to forcefully make our own working-class, consistently democratic, socialist case for impeachment.

Defending Democracy from Trump

"Against the centrist narrative of national security misconduct, the left should be arguing that [the Ukraine affair] is a perfect example of how the imperial presidency endangers democracy," Jeet Heer argued in *The Nation*.

"Trump is treating the presidency as his personal fiefdom, using his office to punish his political enemies. He has been

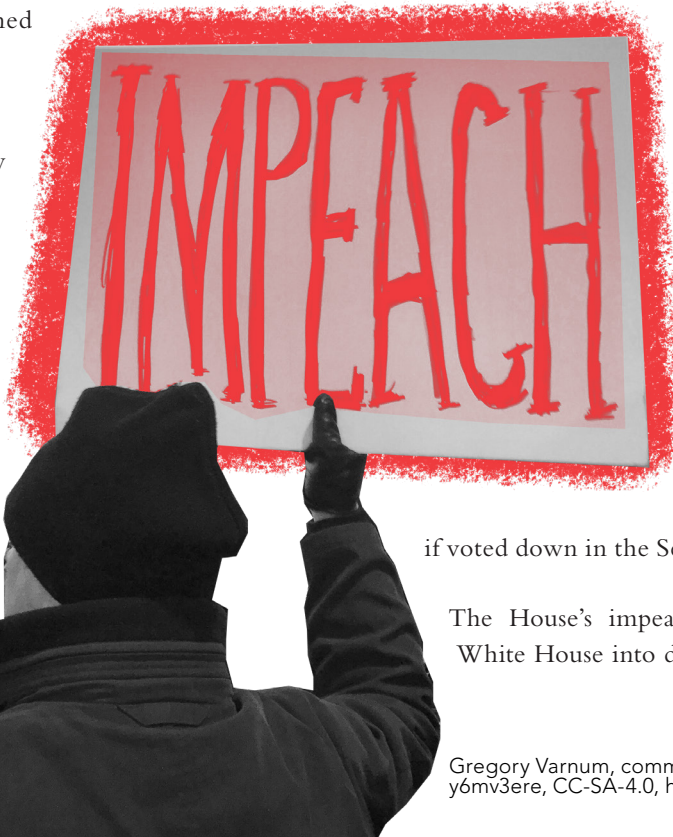
able to get away with it because Congress has, since the early days of the Cold War, abandoned its oversight powers over foreign policy.”

Impeaching Trump would be a powerful check, restraining the power of future presidents. From a working-class point of view, this is about democratic rights, in other words, the conditions we face when we fight back against the billionaire class.

Trump’s claim that he can ignore congressional oversight by refusing to cooperate with the impeachment inquiry would establish a precedent and consolidate even more expansive, unchecked power in the executive branch. Trump’s lawyer even suggested that the president is above the law, claiming they could literally shoot someone on Fifth Avenue without facing charges.

This is part and parcel of Trump’s authoritarian appetite. Trump has unilaterally seized funding to build his border wall without any congressional authorization, brutally clamped down on immigrant rights, encouraged racial profiling and police brutality, and threatened journalists and whistleblowers.

Trump’s assertion of new and sweeping powers reinforces the ongoing process of the US state increasingly trampling on civil liberties with mass surveillance, the “War on Terror,” and the enormous growth of police, military, and intelligence agencies. This immense, repressive power, concentrated in the executive branch,



has been and will be used to repress the left and social movements that threaten the ruling elite.

Heer argues that “the question the left needs to highlight is whether Americans want to continue vesting the presidency with all the terrible powers of surveillance and death when the office could easily fall into the hands of a de-ranged figure like Trump.”

Impeaching Trump would be a powerful check, restraining the power of future presidents. From a working-class point of view, this is about democratic rights, in other words, the conditions we face when we fight back against the billionaire class.

John Yoo, an advocate of executive power and an infamous apologist for torture in the George W. Bush administration, opposes impeachment for exactly this reason. In a *New York Times* editorial, he warned that impeachment would “do long-term harm to the presidency and our national security.”

If Mike Pence becomes president in such a scenario of impeachment and popular resistance, he would be a weak and highly constrained president. Working-class and left-wing movements will face much better conditions and be able to deal with him from a stronger position.

What About the Republican Senate?

Given the Republican majority in the Senate, Trump will most likely not be convicted and removed from office (which requires two-thirds to pass in the Senate). Nevertheless, impeachment is having a positive political impact.

If Congress were to ignore Trump’s outrageous abuse of office, it would mean a de facto acceptance of a dangerous expansion of presidential powers, establishing a precedent to be abused by future presidents. Impeachment in the House, even

if voted down in the Senate, still sends a powerful signal.

The House’s impeachment inquiry has thrown the White House into disarray and forced Trump to focus

on combating it. Such a defensive posture, where Trump and congressional Republicans are hamstrung rather than pushing forward their reactionary agenda, can only be welcomed by the left.

Given the hypocrisy of the Democratic establishment and how they alienate key sections of working- and middle-class people, there are risks that impeachment could rebound in Trump's favor. Trump will no doubt exploit the Democratic establishment's weaknesses by pointing to the corruption of Biden and other Democratic luminaries, as well as making populist appeals against a political elite trying to "overturn" the 2016 election.

However, the spotlight on Trump's corruption and misconduct has so far resulted in a swing of public opinion against Trump and toward impeachment. This has opened cracks in congressional Republicans' support for Trump. It appears likely that, on balance, impeachment will politically weaken Trump and force a number of Senate Republicans to take a politically difficult vote that could undermine their electoral prospects.

Furthermore, it can not be ruled out that the Senate will vote to remove Trump or that Trump will resign (like Nixon did). Opposition to Trump has been growing among key sections of the ruling class. A combination of popular anger and elite opposition could see the Senate vote to convict Trump, though this appears unlikely.

The Democrats' narrow parliamentary and public relations strategy will only be able to exert so much pressure on Republican senators. It would be more effective to make a working-class political appeal against Trump, along with a strategy of mass struggle outside Congress.

Mass protests, occupations of senators' offices, civil disobedience, and working towards strike action would all greatly increase the pressure on the ruling class. We should remember that as recently as this January the threat of a strike by Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, sent Republican lawmakers scurrying to end the government shutdown.

Even if such an approach is unable to get the necessary 67 votes in the Senate, it would help to raise working people's fighting spirit and strengthen left-wing organizations, thus creating a more favorable terrain for Bernie Sanders' campaign and the fight for demands such as Medicare for All, taxing the rich, a Green New Deal, abolishing ICE, and ending sexual harassment. ■

Philip Locker is a DSA activist, a member of the Seattle Education Association, and the editor of Reform & Revolution.

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Who's Afraid of Elizabeth Warren?

Bernie and His Supporters Don't Have to Panic About Warren's Rise in the Polls. We Should Play to Our Strengths.

Stephan Kimmerle

“Democratic donors on Wall Street and in big business are preparing to sit out the presidential campaign fundraising cycle—or even back President Donald Trump—if Sen. Elizabeth Warren wins the party’s nomination,” CNBC reported on September 26.

The next day CNBC quoted a senior private equity executive who spoke on condition of anonymity in fear of retribution by Democratic Party leaders. The executive explained: “You’re in a box because you’re a Democrat and you’re thinking, ‘I want to help the party, but she’s going to hurt me, so I’m going to help President Trump.’”

This big donor anxiety has been the flip side of Warren’s surge in the polls “on a message of purging corruption in Washington and restructuring the economy” (*NY Times*, October 11, 2019). Her progressive, populist message of standing up to Wall Street and demanding “big structural change” has tapped into widespread anger at the ultra-rich and a broken political system establishment—the same anger that first fueled Bernie Sanders’ campaign.

Echoing Sanders, Warren has sworn off PAC money or taking part in big-money fundraisers, instead relying on grassroots small donors.

Compared to Sanders’ proposals for universal programs, Warren’s proposals are generally less sweeping and include some sort of means testing. Nevertheless, Warren

has helped popularize bold demands to crack down on Wall Street and tax the rich, and she has defended Medicare for All, though inconsistently and with less clarity than Sanders. She has raised audacious proposals to break up Facebook, Google, Amazon, and big banks. Warren is also campaigning strongly for tuition-free college, student debt reduction, affordable childcare, a \$15 minimum wage, union rights and a host of other social justice reforms to tackle systemic racism and sexism.

Warren Rising

Warren has steadily risen in the polls since the beginning of Summer. As of October 27, she has surpassed Bernie Sanders and is narrowly behind Joe Biden, the front runner from the Democratic Party’s corporate wing.



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Warren's surge has triggered a debate among Sanders supporters over how to relate to Warren's base.

The first point to register is that the growing support for Warren, along with Sanders' strong support, is a reflection of the enormous swing to the left that has taken place among millions of working- and middle-class people who are the core of the Democratic electorate.

It has been a welcome breath of fresh air to see Warren and Sanders dominating the Democratic debates on national television with robust arguments for taxing the super-rich and Medicare for All, while exposing the flimsy arguments of the "moderate" candidates.

The strong public support for Warren, along with Sanders, is a reflection of the enormous swing to the left that has taken place among millions of working- and middle-class people who are the core of the Democratic electorate.

Five years ago, it would have been unthinkable that two of the three frontrunners in the Democratic primaries would be putting forward such bold, anti-corporate policies. As Sanders and Warren both drive the 2020 Democratic primary to the left, the expectations of millions of ordinary people have been raised.

The left-wing dynamic of the primary has also resulted in a competition between Warren and Sanders over who can put forward the boldest, most far-reaching demands. Sanders has further shifted to the left, calling for an even more aggressive wealth tax than Warren, the cancellation of all \$1.6 trillion in student debt (as opposed to Warren's more limited, means-tested debt-cancellation proposal), and voting rights for all inmates.

The Left Should Support Sanders

Some on the left argue that, since Warren's and Sanders' policies are similar, the left should support Warren, as she would be the first woman president and is somewhat younger than Sanders. There are three main reasons why Sanders deserves to be the candidate for the socialist left:



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1 Bernie has a real strategy for change: movement building. Bernie again and again emphasizes the need to build movements. This was highlighted recently with his pledge to be the "Organizer in Chief" if elected.

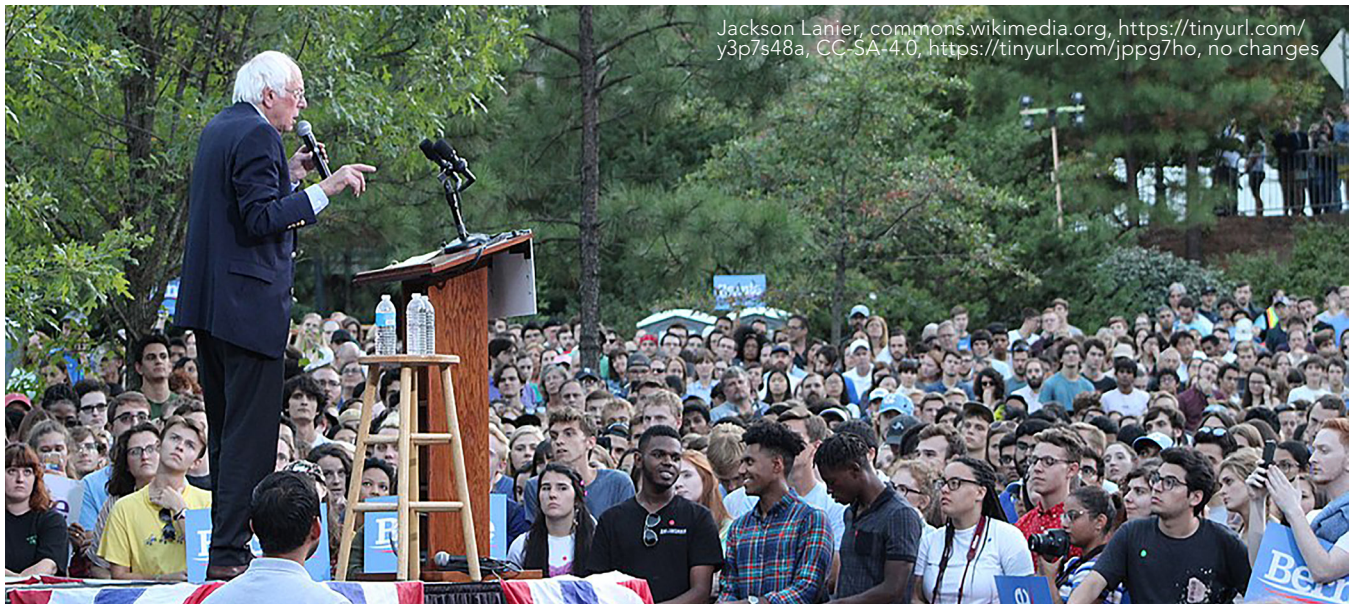
The changes Sanders and Warren are advocating will not happen without the active involvement of millions pushing them forward against the power of Corporate America. Smart policy proposals and good plans are great, but not enough. Warren is starting to echo some of Sanders' language on this issue, but Sanders has made this a key theme throughout his campaigns.

2 Bernie is a proud, self-declared democratic socialist. As he said recently, "If there is going to be class warfare in this country, it's about time the working class won that war." In contrast, Warren has said "[Bernie's] a socialist, and I believe in markets." Or, as she said more explicitly on another occasion, "I am a capitalist to my bones."

Our movements depend on fighting for what we need, not merely what is acceptable within the limitations of capitalism. To have any chance of limiting climate change we will have to fight the fossil fuel corporations head on. We urgently need a discussion in society about fundamental system change.

While Bernie's explanation of socialism is limited to radical reforms within capitalism, he has nonetheless helped promote a mass discussion about socialist change since, at the start of his 2016 campaign, he called for a "political revolution against the billionaire class."

3 An alternative to the Democratic Party is needed. Although Bernie is running in the Democratic Party presidential primary, for most of his life he has run as an independent. After running in the 2016 Demo-



Bernie should call on his millions of supporters to organize mass rallies with demands like canceling student debt.

cratic primary, he went back to being an “independent” Senator. While his second campaign for the Democratic nomination further associates him with the Democratic Party, Bernie’s political career points to the importance of building a base of support independent from the Democratic Party.

These political differences between Sanders and Warren are understood by the political establishment. William Galston, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and former domestic policy adviser to President Bill Clinton, explained: “Sanders sees [his campaign] as a revolutionary mass movement to upset the established order. While Senator Warren is obviously very dissatisfied with the status quo, she describes her campaign in very different terms and terms that I think are less scary.”

Warren also refused to endorse Sanders’ campaign in 2016, despite agreeing with him on many points. From a socialist standpoint, there is a qualitative difference between Bernie and the other Democratic candidates. That is why it was correct for the recent national convention of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) to decide that Bernie was the only candidate running in the Democratic primaries for President that DSA would endorse.

A Debate Over Strategy

As the media tries to use Warren to further sideline Sanders, supporters are split: some are calling for the candidates to work together, while others argue that we need to criticize Warren. For example, D. D. Gutten-

plan, editor of *The Nation*, argues in an October 14 op-ed for a “truce” between Sanders and Warren, while Carl Beijer argues against one in a recent *Jacobin* article.

Eric Blanc, a DSA activist, criticizes Warren’s stances on education in another *Jacobin* article: “When it comes to K-12 public education, Elizabeth Warren’s progressive credentials are weak. Educators and students deserve better.” Tim Higginbotham also critiqued Warren’s unclear stance on Medicare for All in a *Jacobin* article titled “Elizabeth Warren Still Isn’t Getting Specific on Medicare for All.”

These criticisms are all broadly correct. It is necessary to soberly assess each candidate to arrive at a clear understanding of their politics. But that reality is distinct from the question of what is the best strategy for Sanders supporters to win more support for his campaign and appeal to those voters who are considering supporting Warren.

Bernie Needs to Play to His Strength and Mobilize

Bernie Sanders—and all of us campaigning for him—should keep the focus on:

- How to beat Donald Trump in 2020,
- How to overcome the political situation that allowed Trump to win in 2016, and
- How to build a real alternative to the capitalist system and its representatives in the Democratic Party elite, with the aim to build a new socialist and working-class party

The rise of Warren, while generally representing a swing to the left, creates challenges for Sanders' path to victory. The answer to these challenges is to play to the strength of Bernie and his movement: collective action and mass struggle.

Attacking Elizabeth Warren for her weaknesses may seem justified to dedicated Sanders supporters, but focusing on that negative message is not an effective way to bring over the large numbers of ordinary people who look favorably at Warren for left-wing reasons.

There is no doubt that the rise of Warren, while generally representing a swing to the left, creates challenges for Sanders' path to victory. The answer to these challenges is to play to the strength of Bernie and his movement: collective action and mass struggle.

With his huge and highly energetic base, Bernie is in a strong position to initiate mass mobilizations. No other candidate, including Elizabeth Warren, is able to do that. A call for a national day of action to cancel student debt with rallies at universities across the country, would help to energize Bernie's base and raise the profile of his campaign in the broader public with a clear-cut, positive message. One day of coordinated protests could have a national impact and draw more people into political activity.

Bernie and AOC, together with others, could call for a day of mass action for the Green New Deal with rallies and mass blockades of corporate polluters and their Wall Street financiers, following the example of Extinction Rebellion. Such an action would help Bernie stand out, help frame the public debate on our terms, and highlight Bernie's movement-building approach.

Days of action could be organized for Medicare for All with the National Nurses United union and other organizations, with mass canvasses across the country.

Sanders needs to show working people and youth that collective action is necessary, that he is the candidate able to take on the billionaire class, and that his supporters have an

active role to play. Collective actions and mass mobilizations will help make him stand out to the broader public, not just the socialist left.

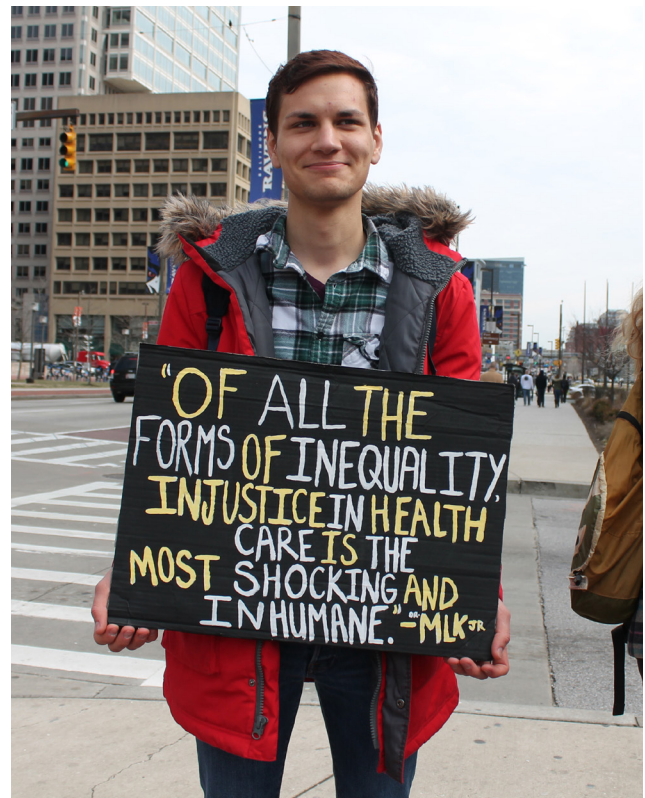
A call to action during one of the national TV debates in coordination with the working-class forces organized around his campaign could draw huge numbers of people into action.

It could also help to appeal to many who are currently supporting Warren. If Sanders openly invited Warren and other progressive forces to endorse and help build together with his campaign mass actions for shared demands, the appeal to Warren's supporters would only be strengthened.

Will Bernie adopt such an approach? Hopefully. However, we should not just depend on him to take such action. Our organization, DSA, can play a role in directly mobilizing in this direction, and consistently calling on Bernie to take this step.

DSA is running an impressive independent campaign for Bernie. We can take the battle to the next level with organizing such national days of action—on campuses, in the streets, at the doors—if we all step up to the task. ■

Stephan Kimmerle is on the Editorial Board of Reform & Revolution and is a Seattle DSA activist.



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ELIMINATE GREEN HOUSE GASES BY 2030

MOVE THE US TO 100% CLEAN AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

ENSURE A JUST TRANSITION FOR ALL COMMUNITIES AND WORKERS

CREATE MILLIONS OF FAMILY-SUPPORTING UNION JOBS

TAKE DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF MAJOR FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES



GREEN NEW DEAL

Val Ross "GND Poster" 2019, Watercolor on watercolor paper, 7" x 9"

DSA Sets Goal of a “Dirty Break” with the Democratic Party

The 2019 National Convention of the Democratic Socialists of America was the largest deliberative gathering of the radical left in a generation. What steps were taken at the convention, and where should Democratic Socialists go from here?

Ramy Khalil

The 2019 National Convention marked a continued shift to the left for Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), building on the leftward movement of the 2017 National Convention. In 2017, DSA formally withdrew from the Socialist International, an alliance of social-democratic parties which embraced neoliberalism in the 1990s. The 2017 convention also elected a new leadership that aimed to move DSA beyond being a mere pressure group on the Democratic Party in order to become a strong socialist force in the US.

Over 1,000 elected delegates gathered in Atlanta from August 2–4 to participate in DSA’s 2019 national convention. Major media outlets reported on the event, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, CNN, and Fox News.

DSA organizers spoke to the delegates about their significant accomplishments, including the important role they played in the teachers’ strikes that are revitalizing the labor movement, the passage of a historic rent control law in NY state, and the election of six socialists to Chicago’s city council.



The convention also set a goal of growing to 100,000 members in a year and a half. The optimistic energy of the convention in Atlanta and the eagerness to build DSA will undoubtedly inspire the existing local chapters and help spawn new ones.

”Dirty Break” with the Democratic Party?

Some of the most significant decisions the convention made were about DSA’s relationship with the Democratic Party. This has been the source of much controversy on the revolutionary left, with some arguing that DSA is “a caucus within the Democratic Party.”

DSA certainly has a pragmatic attitude toward the Democratic Party, but DSA is in no way a simple appendage to the Democratic Party. The 2019 National Convention demonstrated that the majority of DSA members are seeking to build an independent socialist organization.

Delegates voted down an amendment from a member of DSA’s Socialist Majority caucus that would have removed language from a resolution setting the eventual goal of forming an independent working-class party. The final language in the new national electoral policy, drafted by members of DSA’s Bread & Roses caucus, lays out the strategy for a “dirty break” with the Democratic Party:

DSA is committed to building political organization independent of the Democratic Party and their capitalist donors... In the longer term, our goal is to form an independent working-class party, but for now this does not rule out DSA-endorsed candidates running tactically on the Democratic Party ballot line.

The convention also made an important decision that if Bernie Sanders does not win the Democratic Party nomination, DSA will not endorse any other Democrat for president.

DSA Calls for Taking Fossil Fuel Companies into Public Ownership

The convention adopted a resolution calling for democratic public ownership of fossil fuel companies to be included in the Green New Deal. This would enable our society to rapidly reallocate the fossil fuel companies’ massive resources to renewable energy and provide a just transition for all impacted workers.

In the context of Bernie Sanders conflating FDR’s New Deal with socialism, this is a key way for DSA to help popularize a central element of what socialism actually entails—an end to private ownership of the major companies that dominate society.

The resolution, proposed by members of the Reform & Revolution caucus, urged all DSA “members elected

to federal, state, and local political office to promote these demands.” It also committed DSA to “promoting these demands as part of its independent Democratic Socialists for Bernie campaign.”

In effect, the resolution highlights the need for DSA to have democratic input into the work of DSA members elected to public office. This will become increasingly important as more DSA members are elected and public representatives face increasing pressure to move away from the socialist politics they were elected to fight for.

The newly elected National Political Committee and local chapters now need to implement this resolution by consistently incorporating this political stance into our work and messaging. We should ask DSA members in office to raise the demand for democratic public ownership of the fossil fuel companies as part of the Green New Deal, especially AOC and Rashida Tlaib.

DSA is now the center of gravity on the radical left. It will undoubtedly be a key component of any attempts to develop a mass left-wing or working-class party.

Both these resolutions formalized the leftward shift in DSA's political direction over the past four years. In the past, DSA maintained a strategic commitment to attempting to reform the corporate-dominated Democratic Party. This new turn has been fueled by tens of thousands of radicalizing young people who have flooded into the organization.

This new DSA is the center of gravity on the radical left. DSA will undoubtedly be a key component of any attempts to develop a mass left-wing or working-class party.

DSA's new approach toward the Democratic Party was also reflected in the adoption of a resolution critical of Sanders in which the convention agreed to launch an online petition to urge Bernie to adopt a more left-wing foreign policy.

In general, having an independent political profile while energetically supporting Sanders' campaign will be the best way for DSA to connect with radicalizing Sanders supporters and offer them a member-run socialist organization to join and continue organizing with after the 2020 election.

However, in order to achieve a real break and avoid assimilating into the Democratic Party, DSA must integrate this independent strategy into our day-to-day work, rather than leaving this to conference resolutions and journal articles. In practice, this has been lacking from most of DSA's electoral work.

Unfortunately, an amendment along these lines proposed by members of the newly formed Reform & Revolution caucus was voted down by the majority of the convention. The amendment advocated that DSA make the 2020 Sanders campaign its top priority but also challenged DSA's tendency to support Sanders uncritically. The amendment argued for DSA to build the left wing of the Sanders movement, campaign with a distinct socialist message, and work toward the construction of an independent socialist party. Although the amendment was defeated, it did gain the support of around a third of the delegates.



Building the Labor Movement

The convention adopted a number of resolutions urging DSA members to engage in efforts to unionize unorganized workplaces and/or to form rank-and-file caucuses to revitalize existing unions. DSA activist Eric Blanc explained the significance of this: "After decades of treating organized labor as, at best, one good movement among many, leftists are finally putting labor back at the center of anti-capitalist strategy." Another DSA activist and writer, Dan La Botz, added that the convention showed that "while far from it now, DSA clearly wants to be a working-class organization."

Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, brought down the house when she said: "When two million workers were locked out or being forced to work without pay during the government shutdown... I asked, 'What is the labor movement waiting for?' It was time for us to act with urgency and end the shutdown with a general strike... [Republican politicians] knew it sounded like workers might get a taste of our power, and they couldn't have that. We ended the shutdown."

Two Main Wings

As a big tent organization, DSA is home to many different anti-capitalist viewpoints. Throughout the weekend, though, a distinct pattern emerged, and it became clear that the convention was divided between two main wings.

(Of course, this distinction is a broad generalization, and within each camp there were many different viewpoints.) A large minority, grouped behind the *Build* project and the Libertarian Socialist Caucus, argued for deepening DSA's decentralized character. The politics of this wing, broadly speaking, is a mix of horizontalism, anarchism, prefigurative politics, and identity politics.

A majority of the convention, led by Bread & Roses, Socialist Majority, and the Collective Power Network, voted to maintain and strengthen the national character of DSA. These caucuses argued for a national leadership capable of supporting and coordinating the work of chapters and providing a national direction to DSA. This was linked to an outward-looking focus on mass politics and campaigning for structural change in society.

The most consistent debate was about the structure of DSA. The rapid growth of DSA's membership in the past three years has strained outdated organizational structures and an overstretched staff. As a result, DSA has largely functioned as a decentralized confederation of autonomous local chapters.

A series of resolutions from the *Build* and libertarian socialist wing would have formalized and deepened DSA's decentralized character. For example, one resolution would have directed 50% of members' dues to local chapters.

Bread & Roses members moved a resolution to prioritize investing in political education and providing accessible educational resources to chapters. However, amendments were proposed that would have undercut the national leadership's mandate to carry this out, favoring local autonomy instead.

Delegates voted down all the resolutions to further decentralize DSA, but around 40-45% of delegates supported many of them, signifying that this debate will continue.

Overcoming this disagreement will require the National Political Committee (NPC) and local chapters to develop a

stronger organization that can show, in practice, how DSA can have a positive impact on the struggles of workers and oppressed people when our chapters pool our resources and deploy them in a unified manner.

Point of Privilege

The convention got bogged down many times by a series of procedural motions, counter-motions, points of privilege, and points of order. Delegates grew frustrated as it became increasingly clear these motions were limiting the convention's time for substantive political debate. However, this problem was caused not simply by procedural motions or *Robert's Rules of Order*; it was largely due to the depoliticized agenda.

Chicago DSA activist Joe Allen hit the nail on the head: "The major political problem with the DSA convention is that it is primarily organized around constitutional/bylaws amendments and resolutions rather than political perspectives which makes for a mosh pit around procedural challenges, instead of the convention being around political perspectives of various areas of work. So the substance of discussion is largely apolitical. Despite this, as the convention moved forward, the level of political discussion rose, and many good resolutions passed."

Prominent Palestinian feminist Linda Sarsour voiced the sentiment of many delegates when she said: "If you are in DSA to take one collective liberation movement to divide it up into things that make you feel comfortable, this is not the organization for you... There are people whose lives depend on us to build a political movement... I've been a little frustrated watching this whole thing, procedural stuff. There's five hours of against this and against that and for this and for that... We don't have time for this. Get it together DSA."

DSA should work to prevent oppressive ideas and behaviors from appearing in DSA. It is important we make DSA as accessible as possible to working-class people of all backgrounds so we can organize mass struggles for structural change of society.



At the same time, DSA will never be able to be a pre-figurative model of a socialist society as long as we are still living under this capitalist system which constantly fosters racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of oppression.

At future conventions, the NPC needs to propose an agenda that sets aside the majority of time for delegate discussions around key political developments and how DSA should respond. In general, DSA chapters should prioritize discussing our analysis of the main developments in society and how DSA should respond, rather than focusing on organizational questions, which should be adjusted as needed to serve our political aims. Chairs also need to be elected and empowered to focus the meeting on key political questions.

Growing Pains of a New Movement

The US is at a historic low point of working-class organization and class consciousness, so its new rapidly growing socialist movement is inevitably shaped by inexperience, a lack of political clarity, and all the inevitable difficulties working-class people face in organizing our own independent movement.

The social makeup of the convention was reflective of DSA: disproportionately white, college-educated millennials. However, there was an important layer of workers and union activists, and a decent mix of people of color. These weaknesses can be overcome through DSA participating in and leading campaigns, where possible, rooted in the multiracial working class.

The convention provided a clear snapshot of the ideas and questions being debated in DSA. While it is time-consuming for members to discuss these questions out, it is a real strength that the key questions which are being debated

throughout the emerging left are clearly expressed and organized within DSA. The organization's democratic,

member-run character stands in sharp contrast to most of the US left, which is dominated by top-down NGOs and the Democratic Party.

Despite the challenges, the convention succeeded in generating a high level of participation, creating space for vigorous democratic debate, and making clear decisions on a wide range of important issues. As *The New York Times* pointed out, "the contrast with Occupy Wall Street's general assemblies, which sought to establish consensus rather than decisive victors and losers, was unmistakable."

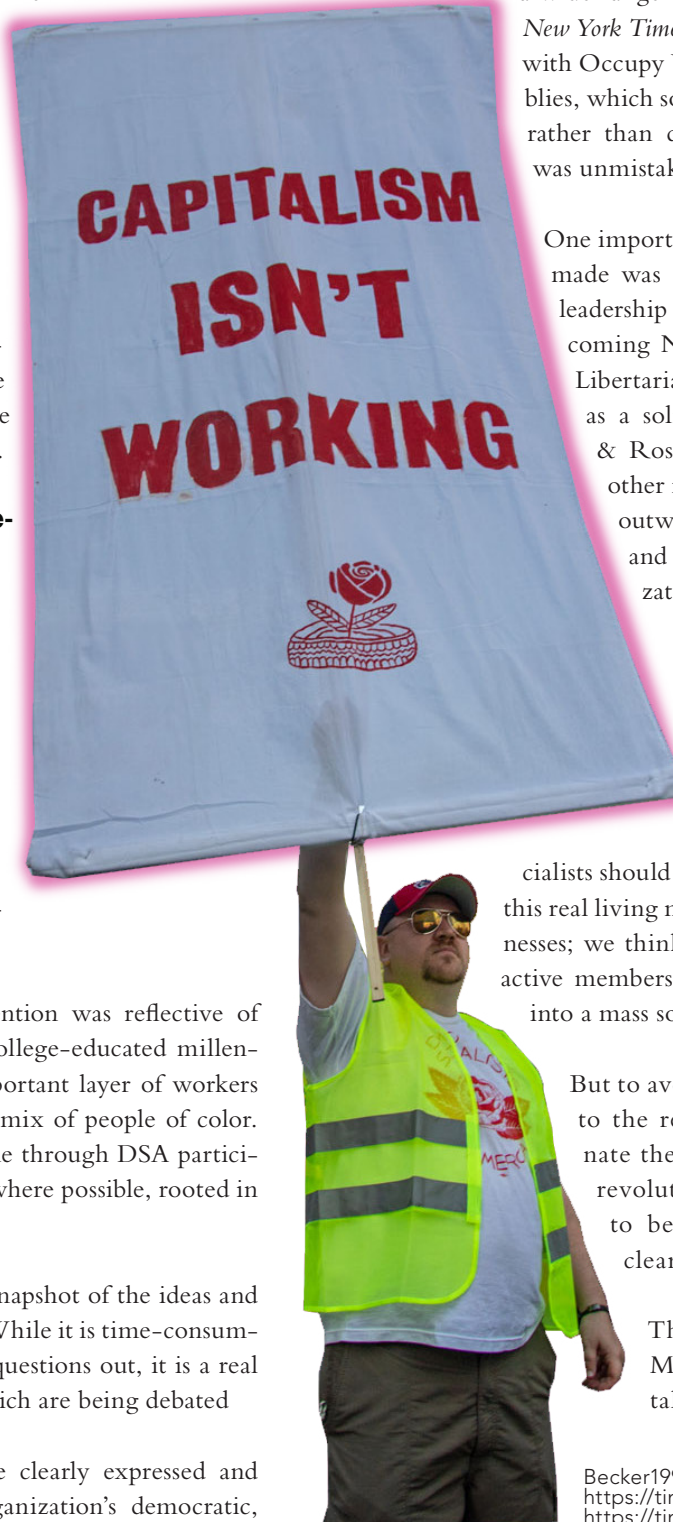
One important decision the convention made was the election of DSA's new leadership body. A minority of the incoming NPC is from *Build* and the Libertarian Socialist Caucus, whereas a solid majority is from Bread & Roses, Socialist Majority, and other independents committed to outward-facing, mass campaigns and building a national organization.

Reform & Revolution

The Reform & Revolution caucus believes that revolutionary socialists should not isolate themselves from this real living movement, despite its weaknesses; we think revolutionaries should be active members of DSA and help build it into a mass socialist party.

But to avoid the danger of adapting to the reformist ideas that dominate the new socialist movement, revolutionaries in DSA need to be organized and advocate clear Marxist politics.

This includes making a Marxist case for fundamental socialist change, not just



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an expanded welfare state, which Bernie Sanders and AOC advocate. It also means building a conscious understanding among activists of the huge pressures of opportunism and reformism that will develop as DSA grows.

When the convention ended, the whole room erupted spontaneously into singing “Solidarity Forever.” The tremendous enthusiasm in the room reflected the potential inherent in this new radicalizing force. A new chapter has opened up for the US socialist movement. The next few years offer a great opportunity for strengthening DSA and building a revolutionary Marxist current within it. ■

Ramy Khalil was elected by the Seattle DSA chapter as a delegate to the National Convention. He also was the Campaign Manager for Kshama Sawant in 2013 when she was elected as the first independent socialist on the Seattle City Council in 100 years. A similar version of this article was originally posted on ReformAndRevolution.org shortly after the DSA convention in August.

If You Build It, They Will Come

Seattle Neighborhood DSA Group Grows by Putting Politics Front and Center

Bryan Watson

Like other chapters of DSA, the Seattle chapter has grown by leaps and bounds since 2016 and now numbers 1,000 members. These members have thrown themselves into a range of activities—from Democratic Socialists for Bernie and the election campaign of Shaun Scott (a DSA member running for city council), to Medicare for All and a unionization drive at a local museum.

Yet this exciting growth creates challenges as well, including how to politically engage new members and activate current members. To help create a space for political discussion, a small group began meeting in Seattle’s District 3, based in Seattle’s urban core. These meetings have seen a steady growth in attendance, going from a handful of participants to 15-30 members actively participating in bi-weekly political discussions.

The growth reflects a new approach that could become a potential model of how to recruit new members, create a space for democratic discussion, activate and politically educate current members, and turn people out for campaigns in the community.

According to Stuart Strader, one of the organizers of District 3:

The success has been based on centering politics, by politically discussing the key political questions on the minds of all DSA members. We have begun to fill a need in DSA—organized political discussion coupled with political activism. Too often, political discussions can be sacrificed for action or for discussions on organizational questions. Don’t get me wrong. While we take political debate very seriously, we aren’t a talk shop.

We use our political discussions to inform our political activity. We’ve found this approach to be effective in motivating members to be more active, where they are beginning to actively build DSA, many for the first time! In our experience, there’s a hunger for more political discussion and debate. What we’re doing is providing an organized and dynamic format for that.

Centering Politics

The key to the success of this model, so far, lies in the political topics discussed by the District 3 group. Too often, study groups approach political questions or Marxist concepts in an abstract fashion. However, discussing these same concepts through the medium of concrete current events and living mass struggles brings those same concepts to life. Some of the topics have included “Trump’s Racist Attacks and How to Fight Them—Should DSA Organize Protests?” and “The Power of Protest: Lessons from Hong Kong & Puerto Rico.”

Each meeting begins with an hour-long political discussion, with a member giving a 10-20 minute introduction to provide a socialist framework that people can agree with, disagree with, or add to. We’ve found that the larger group discussions allow for an enriched conversation because the whole group gets to grapple with more aspects of the topic by tapping into the range of experiences of the larger group.

Carolyn Brotherton, a DSA activist and District 3 member, explained “one thing that makes the discussions good is that in addition to having a diversity of experiences and political education, we have people whose political thinking aligns with different political tendencies within the socialist movement. So we aren’t an echo chamber, and I think the disagreements make the discussions worthwhile. When people’s ideas are constructively challenged that makes everyone’s thinking more clear.”

This larger group approach differs from the way political discussions are often held in the Seattle chapter with some exceptions. During general membership meetings there are typically reports from working groups and sometimes a political presentation followed by small breakout discussion groups.

The format of small breakout groups has its advantages, but

it also has limits. A discussion with the full group allows for a more democratic discussion where members can raise their views and hear a broader diversity of political opinions from the entire body compared to smaller breakout groups.

According to Sean, a Seattle District 3 DSA member, “The D3 meetings allow me the space to listen, to speak, and to evolve my politics through dynamic discussion with a wide range of perspectives. No one’s voice is drowned out. These kinds of discussions foster growth and challenge people to defend and refine their ideas. I invariably come away feeling humbled, energized, and with a clearer vision.”

Putting Ideas into Action

We’ve also encouraged people to be politically active by linking the political topics to concrete activity. For example, following Trump’s racist attacks on the Squad, we had a political discussion on “How to fight Trump’s racist attacks on the Squad.” Flowing from that discussion the District 3 group suggested to the chapter leadership that DSA endorse a local anti-ICE rally, and we actively publicized it in the district. The rally was a big success—hundreds of protestors shut down an ICE office!

The District 3 group also hosted a public meeting, “Bernie Sanders: What’s Possible with a Socialist President?” attended by over 50 people. Many indicated they were new to DSA or had not been active before, and we raised \$1,000 for DSA through a political financial appeal. We’ve also organized literature tables and postering in the district for Bernie debate watch parties and have gone as a district group to doorknock for Kshama Sawant and Shaun Scott, two socialists running for Seattle City Council. ■

Bryan Watson is a DSA activist in Seattle District 3. In 2015 he was the Finance Director for Kshama Sawant’s independent socialist re-election campaign to City Council.



Joan Hunter Iovino "Detention Center" 2018, Acrylic on watercolor paper, 9" x 12"

"The painting is... based on a photograph of a child immigrant detention center in the United States taken in 2018. It is an attempt to illustrate and emphasize the cruel reality of the family separation policies currently in effect." -JHi

Joan Hunter Iovino is a left-wing activist and writer, as well as a full-time fine art painter specializing in expressionism. She has also illustrated a children's version of the Tao called *Voyage To The Sun*.

Lean in or Rise up?

***Feminism for the 99%* is a powerful polemic against liberal “lean-in” feminism and a valuable critique of class-reductionist tendencies within the left. At the same time, its strategy to change society is incomplete.**

Anya Mae Lemlich and Stephan Kimmerle

***Feminism for the 99%* has four main strengths:**

1 It Pushes the Feminist Movement to the Left

One of the strongest contributions of the authors of *Feminism for the 99%*, Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser, is their bracing take-down of liberal, corporate feminism, or what they call “equal-opportunity domination.” The academic-activist authors present the global feminist movement at a crossroads, where one path is the type of feminism that sees itself “as a handmaiden of capitalism,” (p. 2) which prioritizes a few women reaching the top of the social ladder only to continue to oppress the majority of the world’s population.

The authors recognize the revitalized feminist political moment we are in, as well as the importance of correcting course away from liberal feminism. The global feminist movement is on the rise, from militant feminist strikes to fights for abortion rights to the outcry of #MeToo in dozens of countries. In the US, the women’s marches against Trump re-ignited and widened the feminist movement, but they remained tied to the dominant ideology of liberalism, closely aligned with the corporate Democratic party.

As organizers and supporters of the International Women’s Strike and self-identified Marxists, the authors argue for a different kind of feminism: one that is anti-capitalist, internationalist and anti-racist. They do this through a series of 11 theses.



Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto. By Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser. Verso 2019, 96 pages, \$12.95 paperback.

2

Anti-capitalism

One of the authors' brilliant moves is to argue convincingly that the varied oppressions that people face in our society are all grounded in capitalism. Thesis #8 argues that capitalism is built on racial and colonial violence, which it continues to prop up in order to sustain itself. It also points out the historic racism embedded in liberal feminism, and that racism serves as a useful tool for misogyny. In thesis #9, they argue that it is capitalism, not just human activity, that is destroying our planet.

Thesis #5 deals with gender oppression under capitalism. Locating the oppression of women in social reproduction, the authors argue that the work of "people-making" under capitalism was both assigned to women (reinforcing gender roles) and subordinated to the making of profit. By making clear the hidden but necessary labor that social reproduction provides for capitalism and its productive sphere, the authors aim to prove that these non-economic spheres are also sites of struggle.

The authors understand capitalism as what Marx would call a "totality," as "not just an economic system, but something larger: an institutionalized social order that also encompasses the apparently 'noneconomic' relations and practices that sustain the official economy" (p. 64). The deeper contradictions in our society, then, are not limited to the capitalist economy, but take place throughout capitalist society as a whole.

In attacking this totality, the authors call for a class-struggle approach. One of the authors, Tithi Bhattacharya, refers to "feminism for the 99 percent" as "class-struggle feminism." The authors expand "class struggle" outside of the so-called traditional battles over wages and economic gains. They reaffirm that struggles over social reproduction (housing, free transit, universal health care, etc.) are class-struggle approaches.

3

A Strategic Focus on the Strike

The new feminist strike is one such class-struggle approach. Inspired by the feminist strikes in Spain, Argentina, and elsewhere, the authors see the reinvention of the strike as the "key innovation of the current movement."

Given the bureaucratic, conservative approach of most labor leaders, this is a welcome wake-up call, not only to

rebuild labor militancy but also to use the power of strikes to fight for all types of working-class issues, not just economic, but against oppression in any form. The movement's re-popularization of the strike and challenging of a narrow conception of who can strike is a positive development. After all, strikes are the working class' most powerful weapon. For instance, in Poland, the 2018 feminist strike succeeded in defeating a bill that would have made abortion completely illegal.

The authors say: "Withholding not only waged work, but also the unwaged work of social reproduction, they have disclosed the latter's indispensable role in capitalist society. Making visible women's power, they have challenged labor unions' claim to 'own' the strike."

The 2018 feminist strikes in Spain and Argentina raised consciousness, expectations and organizing abilities. These sorts of "protest strikes" or "strikes as demonstrations" are important because they help make visible our common and collective oppression. They push back against the idea that it is we as individuals, not society, who are responsible for our misery. Participants in mass strikes feel the strength of their numbers, which can then pave the way for further mass action.

Still, to understand where the working class' most potent power lies, it makes sense from a strategic point of view to differentiate between strikes of waged workers and those in unwaged social reproduction. Strikes of waged workers wield more economic power by hitting the profits of individual capitalists. Generally, strikes in waged workplaces point to the fact that the working class produces all the wealth, can interrupt the system of profit production, and—in the end—can take over production without the bosses.

This is not an argument to belittle strikes of unwaged social reproduction workers or to neglect the power they have. It is an argument to be aware of the power structure of capitalist society and to build working-class and feminist power strategically so we can build a movement to take over society and end oppression.

We should work not only to build strikes outside of the waged workplace, but also to reignite strikes within the waged workplace. This will build militancy beyond the approach of conservative labor leaders and also take up non-economic demands. Given that the global working class is majority female and people of color, economic power in workplaces can be used to move the whole labor movement into struggle against issues such as the gender

pay gap, sexual harassment at workplaces and in society at-large, and the oppression of people of color, trans, and gender non-conforming people.

4 A Rejection of an Economistic Approach

Feminism for the 99% states: “Too many sections of the left still fall back on the old formula holding that what unites us is an abstract and homogenous notion of class, and that feminism and anti-racism can only divide us.” Instead of an identity-politics approach that all too often counters class-reductionism with class deprioritization, the authors argue for an expansive view of class and class struggle. This is one of the biggest contributions of *Feminism for the 99%*.

The working class is not, and was never, primarily white and male, nor is it homogenous. As they say, the “global working class comprises billions of women, immigrants, and people of color.” It is multi-faceted and made up of people with diverse identities.

Capitalism uses our heterogeneity to divide us. The way to unify the working class is not to ignore these differences. Rather, the authors argue, we need to take these differences seriously and build solidarity together. We can build this unity by both acknowledging divisions, waging a struggle against oppression, recognizing its roots in class society, and by fighting “against capitalism’s weaponization of our differences.

Three critiques of *Feminism for the 99%*:

1 Anti-capitalist Feminism Needs to Develop a Socialist Alternative

The authors, who all identify as Marxists, present their feminist Manifesto in the tradition of the Communist Manifesto. Unfortunately, unlike Marx and Engels, they do not explicitly argue for a socialist society. While brilliantly deriding capitalism for the mess it has caused, they do not present a thorough alternative vision for the society we’re fighting for.

Capitalism is what Marx and Engels called a “mode of production,” an economic system which shapes the whole of society. How we produce goods and services is the economic foundation of society, but capitalism is much more



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International Women’s Day in Spain in 2018

than that; it is a “totality.” We need to talk about a vision for a completely different mode of how humans should produce and reproduce society—a socialist vision of liberation and reorganization of society.

Of course, like the authors, we do not expect to have a roadmap or ideal utopia laid out for us ahead of time. But socialist feminists should go beyond just “anti-capitalist” organizing and lay out an idea of a socialist feminist future: one that includes democratic, working-class control over the means of production (the large corporations, raw materials, supply chains, energy production, etc.)

A socialist vision must also include the need to revolutionize how society organizes social reproduction. Socially necessary tasks need to be drawn into the public sphere and taken out of the private sphere of the nuclear family which reproduces patriarchy. This can be done by developing universal social services: high-quality childcare, elder-care, healthcare, paid parental leave, cheap and accessible high quality restaurants and food, etc. All of this will lay the foundation for the development of a radically different culture, one that is democratic, egalitarian, solidaristic, feminist, and anti-racist.

2 Its Strategy to Achieve Change Falls a Bit Short

The main strategy put forward in *Feminism for the 99%* is for all radical movements to join together in a common anti-capitalist insurgency, and for these movements to create alliances.

While this is certainly positive, this strategy is incomplete. What's missing is a call for the self-organization of the working class. To that end we argue for the working class to create a political party of its own, rooted in workplaces and neighborhoods, armed with Marxist ideas to change the world. Workers and oppressed groups need our own party to build up our power, flex our muscles by winning fights for reforms through militant strike action and other forms of mass action, and we need to link these struggles to eventually taking power ourselves.

We agree with the broad definition of the working class that the authors present—a working class that is heterogeneous and varied that includes not only currently employed waged workers but also their families, communities, unwaged workers, and unemployed workers — or in Marx's terms, “the reserve army of labor.”

The working class is only powerful when we act together. A working-class party unified not on the basis of glossing over differences but by fighting for the entire class on all of our issues (not just economic issues) is how we self-organize and start to build our power.



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Mass strikes have been a key feature of the new global feminist wave Photo by: Guadiramone

3

It Doesn't Deal with Identity Politics

The authors do not explicitly engage with “identity politics.” Instead, they present two strands of politics to differentiate themselves from—liberal feminism on the right and class-reductionism on the left. But radical versions of identity politics are dominant today among left-wing feminists. This needs to be addressed by Marxist feminists.

Identity politics have come to take on different meanings for different people. We use the term to describe theories of fighting oppression that are not only based around identity but are not linked to an overarching socialist program for change; that tend to prioritize identity over political content; and do not view the working class as the decisive agent for revolutionary change.

Capitalism uses differences in identity to divide the working class, and a danger with identity politics is that it can reinforce and deepen these divisions. Like the authors, we should be clear that it is capitalism that divides us. We must identify capitalism as the enemy, while recognizing, as the authors do, that capitalism relies on and promotes racism, sexism and homophobia within the working class. Fighting solely along lines of identity and reducing each other to “allies” in our different struggles will not lead to the kind of broad working-class struggle and power that we need to overthrow the ruling elite.

This understanding does not diminish the deep divisions of racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia within the working class, nor the success with which the ruling class has used these oppressions to divide us. It also does not imply in any way that the struggles against the oppression of women, LGBTQ people, or people of color have to wait until a unified working class confronts these issues. Out of these battles, together with the power of the labor movement, socialist feminists can argue to build unifying struggles, movements and organizations.

We agree with the authors that the working class must acknowledge these differences, take them seriously, and act in solidarity. But it will take more than that. Instead of prettifying the work, we need to confront the real challenges and divisions we face. Bringing our struggles together will not happen automatically. We need to argue for a conscious approach.

Building solidarity will require struggle and debate within working-class organizations. The dominant ideas in move-

Feminism for the 99% highlights, liberal ideas, which are limited to working within the framework of capitalism, compete with socialist ideas, which aim to put an end to capitalism. Similarly, socialist politics and identity politics also compete with one another. Identity politics currently dominate the left, and, to their credit, these ideas have contributed to leading a new generation into waves of social struggle. But at the same time, identity politics too often point toward the fragmentation of struggles and efforts to organize.

That is why we need to build a conscious political force, our own political party, with a leadership that systematically fights for a unified socialist feminist program both within the feminist movement and in the struggles of workers and all the oppressed.

The demands among different sections of the working class will not always be the same. To develop solidarity between these different struggles requires a socialist party that is actively involved in each of these battles that can bring together their varied experiences. Such a generalized

political undertaking – a common political party fighting for leadership in the working class – allows for socialists involved in different movements to develop a common strategy and demands.

Read the Book and Join the Socialist Feminist Struggle

Feminism for the 99% is a welcome contribution to the global feminist movement which adds to the debate about how to resist oppression and exploitation. Its strength lies in its unbending wrath toward liberal feminism and its wider understanding of capitalism as the root source of oppression.

It is a call not to “lean in” but to rise up! ■

Anya Mae Lemlich and Stephan Kimmerle are activists in DSA and members of its Reform & Revolution caucus.



Which Way Forward for the Feminist Movement Today?

Interview with Womxn's March Organizer and DSA Activist Linda Sarsour

Trump's inauguration as president on January 20, 2017 was met with the largest protests in US history when millions took to the streets. Linda Sarsour was one of the key organizers of those historic Womxn's Marches; she is an activist with the Brooklyn chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and was a speaker at the DSA National Convention in Atlanta. DSA Convention delegate HARRIS L. sat down with Linda and asked her about the Womxn's Marches and DSA's role in the feminist movement. (This is a shortened transcript of an interview that took place on August 3, 2019 before Sarsour resigned from her position with the Womxn's March.)

HARRIS The Womxn's Marches brought the global feminist movement from India, Poland, Argentina and many other countries here to the US. While these marches lacked unifying concrete demands, their enormous size did undermine Trump's legitimacy. Since then, however, the corporate media and the Democratic Party establishment have worked to stoke exaggerated divisions within the movement, resulting in fractures and potentially the end of the marches.

Some DSA activists believe we can help reverse this backwards momentum by taking a lead in the feminist movement and helping organize new feminist marches. Do you believe there is a future for the Womxn's Marches?

LINDA I think there historically have always been these moments—it's not the first time. Anytime the opposition sees powerful movements that are organizing for ordinary people, we're going to get attacked. And it was very clear to us what those attacks were going to be based on. It was going to be based on identities, the beliefs that we shared, and particularly because I was Palestinian. And they were attacking me literally the Monday after the 2017 Womxn's March, and I was very grateful for the solidarity that I received from around the country.

The right is very organized in that sense. They actually have an entire operation to go after political activists and leftist organizations that have power. Which is why DSA for me is that opportunity for us to build a strong, sustainable movement that cannot be pierced by oppositional attacks.

The Womxn's March was kind of left open because we are a decentralized organization. These womxn who are leading sister marches, some are young, not in the sense of age necessarily, but young from the perspective of being new organizers. A lot of sister marches, when they saw the attacks happening, they had never had this experience before, and they were very scared. That's when we saw the marches split in many different directions or cancelled.

For 2020 we're in the process of expanding the board, the leadership of the Womxn's March, and there's two camps: one camp that's like, "let's do marches," and another camp that says, "could we put our resources in electoral organizing and get people to focus on building that kind of power that we need to in 2020?" I'm a base builder. So I was in a third camp by myself often times. Of course, I believe electoral power is important, and I also believe that visible sol-



Festival of Faiths, commons.wikimedia.org, <https://tinyurl.com/yykzh5e>, CC-SA-2.0, <https://tinyurl.com/kp59kt2>, altered

Linda Sarsour

“I don’t feel affiliated with the Democratic Party in any way... Eventually, there is an opportunity for us to smash the duopoly in this country.”

idity and marches are important, too. But I also believe in long-term base building of communities that outlast the election. And so for me, it’s the concept of door-knocking, relationship-building, really putting in that work on the ground and literally being at the doorsteps of the people.

So there’s no confirmation on whether there will be marches. Some sister marches may choose to do that, which is great, because they are autonomous. But from a national perspective, maybe it’s not a march. Maybe it’s a convention that brings together Womxn’s Marches from across the country, makes sure they have the right training to go back and build power in their communities.

So for me, the Womxn’s March is also an example of how easily we can be factioned as a movement and how this idea of unity for many means that we’re all the same, we all want the same thing. That’s why it was very important for me to say here that unity is not conformity. You could be in the feminist movement and believe in something different from me, so long as we believe that all womxn or womxn-identifying people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

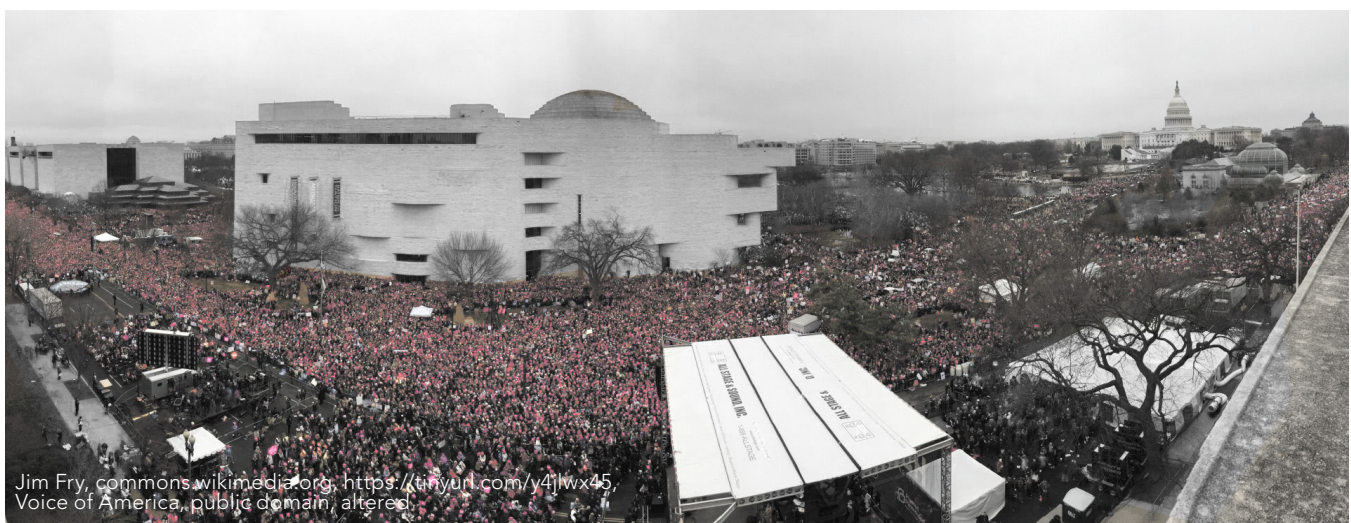
HARRIS What do you think is the role for DSA in building the feminist movement right now?

LINDA If I’m going to be part of an organization, you have to talk about environmental justice and racial justice. You have to talk about healthcare. And so that’s also been a struggle in the movement, where womxn believe that womxn’s issues can’t be criminal justice reform or can’t be the connection between babies at the borders and feminism. And I’m just like, folks, we got to do a lot more political education. But DSA has the opportunity: we have the ideology, we have the principles, we have the values.

HARRIS There is a struggle happening within progressive movements about whether our best shot at transforming politics is through taking over the Democratic Party, or whether we’re going to have to build our own independent movement while bringing along people who remain in the Democratic Party. How do you think we should organize our movement?

LINDA I’m a “small-d democrat.” I don’t feel affiliated with the Democratic Party in any way. The Democratic Party is a harm-reduction party, and that’s the only reason I even vote on that line. So they got me until 2020, but I believe what you’re saying, which is why we have to figure out how to build a sustainable movement for DSA. Eventually, there is an opportunity for us to smash the duopoly in this country.

I’m talking about organizing millions of people to get on a ballot and actually be able to create a party that really centers working people, centers marginalized people. Solidarity is a verb. DSA is a solidarity organization. It requires us to understand that we have to ameliorate suffering, but also build a transformative kind of revolution. ■



Jim Fry, commons.wikimedia.org, <https://tinyurl.com/y4j1wx45>, Voice of America, public domain, altered

The 2017 Womxn’s Marches were the largest protests in US history

Puerto Rican Protestors Get the Goods

Working-class Puerto Ricans showed how protests can bring down a corrupt executive, setting a powerful example for what resistance to Trump could look like.

Mark Rafferty

Living in a territory that's been governed by outside powers for centuries, Puerto Ricans have a long, rich history of fighting back against oppression at home and abroad. The exposure on July 13 of blatantly elitist, sexist, homophobic text messages between Governor Ricky Rosello and his cronies was so egregious that it united people across social divides and sparked a massive protest movement in the streets.

Now, the departure of Rosello and the installation of the reticent Wada Vazquez has posed a question: how can working-class people make fundamental changes, beyond a changing of the guard?

A New Kind of Colonialism

The massive anger that swept Governor Ricky Rosello out of office came on the tide of a long-brewing anger over the latest chapter in Puerto Rico's history as an exploited colony. Since the US took over Puerto Rico after hundreds of years of Spanish exploitation, the US ruling class has attempted to turn Puerto Rico into an offshore workshop where corporations can reap the benefits of operating in America without having to deal with the same wages, labor rights, and environmental regulations as on the mainland. For decades, the US government has used tax breaks to entice US corporations to Puerto Rico, like the 1976 Tax Code changes that exempted corporations from profits earned in US territories.

In 1996, a drive to correct the US government's deficit, as well as popular anger about corporate welfare, led the

Clinton Administration to revise the tax code and phase out the subsidies over a decade. During that time, US corporations fled back to the mainland, taking resources and jobs with them, ultimately reducing Puerto Rico's manufacturing base by 40%. The year the subsidies expired, 2006, the Puerto Rican economy entered a nearly continuous recession that is now in its 13th year.

With these heavy losses and a declining population, the island's government took on increasing amounts of debt from European and American banks, ultimately reaching \$70 billion at its peak. As the government grew increasingly unable to pay the debt, the Obama administration, supported by both Republicans and Democrats, imposed the ironically named PROMESA ("Promise") Act in 2016. This law sought to recover the banks' money and in the process strip Puerto Ricans of even the most basic democracy and control over their island.

One third of the island's population — one million people —took to the streets in a general strike that succeeded in forcing Rosello to resign

The act created an unelected Fiscal Control Board and gave it supremacy over the island's elected bodies. The Fiscal Control Board's first steps were to impose massive cuts to pensions, schools, healthcare, and other essential services, and to reduce labor standards, including lowering the minimum wage for young workers. Meanwhile, the "junta," as Puerto Ricans call the Fiscal Control Board,



Protesters demand #RickyResign! #NoCorruptPoliticiansNoCowards

has used public funds to pay hefty fees to financial firms and consultancies for these “solutions,” often to the very same consultants who helped orchestrate the debt crisis.

The ruling classes of Puerto Rico and the US have benefited from this, while the census puts 43% of Puerto Rico residents below the poverty line. Throughout this process, which author Naomi Klein has called “disaster capitalism,” the US ruling class has used crises in Puerto Rico to expand the reach of capitalism on the island and find new opportunities to extract wealth back to the US.

Resisting The Junta

Working-class Puerto Ricans did not accept this financial takeover lying down. The Fiscal Control Board’s budget cuts provoked a huge wave of protests and massive student strikes in the spring and summer of 2017. After Hurricane Maria ravaged the island in September 2017, however, the protest movement was set back as homes and lives were devastated.

Governor Ricky Rossello played a demagogic role in opposing the US-imposed Fiscal Control Board. Rossello came to office as a member of the Popular Democratic Party, which has traditionally caucused with the Democratic Party, and as official proponents of statehood, the PPD claims to be more anti-colonial than their rivals.

Rosello initially applauded the Fiscal Control Board’s austerity plan. However, as it came closer to being implemented, huge protests erupted. In August 2017, Rosello made a dramatic show of resistance, opposing furloughs that would cut government workers two days a month, and threatening to risk arrest to prevent the plan from being enacted. The ongoing protests continued to drive Rosello further from the junta, and he even filed a lawsuit in the summer of 2018 protesting their broad powers, which led to a ruling in the junta’s favor.

But Rossello’s objections were merely about democratic process and control. He and the junta didn’t differ in their basic views of the problem and the neoliberal approach toward addressing it. For example, Rossello worked to privatize PREPA, the Puerto Rico Electric Authority, which had long been a goal of the neoliberal “disaster capitalists.”

#RickyLeaks Sparks Uproar

The exposure of Rosello’s deeply offensive text messages on July 13 sparked off resentment from virtually all sections of Puerto Rican society. In some ways, the protests were similar to the protests that erupted across the entire US against Trump in 2016–18.

The behavior of the top executive in Puerto Rico was so obviously abhorrent that it touched off protests that were the largest in its history. Huge swaths of people who had never

participated in political protest before came out and took to the streets, bringing political participation to a level never seen before. Popular anger at austerity was clear from the popular call “Ricky, resign, and take the junta with you!”

The opposition to Ricky seemed to unite working-class Puerto Ricans, large sections of the ruling class, celebrities and eventually even the bulk of Rosello’s own party who finally came to see him as a liability. Under pressure from ordinary people protesting non-stop in the streets, Puerto Rican legislators vowed to take up articles of impeachment. On July 24th, Carlos Núñez, the president of Puerto Rico’s House of Representatives, gave Rosello a choice of resignation or impeachment proceedings beginning the next day.

Governor Rosello had appeared to be digging in his heels, refusing to step down after two weeks of enormous daily protests. But protesters responded with an effective general strike on July 22. An estimated one million people took to the streets, an entire third of the island’s population. The general strike massively threatened the ruling class of the island and finally succeeded in forcing Rosello to resign.

The speed at which the popular rebellion erupted exposes the fallacy of the common narrative that social change always happens gradually. The combination of major events—the Fiscal Control Board’s budget cuts, the devastation of Hurricane Maria, and the exposure of the governor’s deeply condescending text messages—all came together to spark a powerful explosion of popular protest.

It was these working-class protests that drove lawmakers to begin exploring impeachment and encouraged members of the PPD to view Rosello as a liability. As the protests seriously disrupted the economic life of the country and created a concrete crisis, Rosello was isolated and abandoned.

What’s remarkable is the way in which the protests called for resignation and didn’t wait on the impeachment process. In fact, within hours of Rosello stepping down, the Puerto Rican House of Representatives’ special committee to research impeachment was still hard at work determining if Rosello had committed an impeachable offense!

Class Struggle after Rosello

The battle for the future of Puerto Rico has continued after Rosello’s departure. It’s worth noting that the forces of neo-liberalism had looked forward to Rosello’s departure, since he had been obstructing the junta’s unhindered access to the island.

As *The Intercept* reported, a number of key voices of the US ruling class, including the head of the Senate committee overseeing PROMESA and the editorial board of *The Washington Post*, called for the junta to be strengthened in the face of the elected government’s apparent “weakness.” *The Caribbean Times* reported dozens of civil society organizations protested to get a judge to halt bankruptcy proceedings for 120 days to ensure that the Rosello power vacuum was not used to roll back democracy even further.

As many people returned to their homes, groups of working-class Puerto Ricans have fought to keep the movement alive. One exciting development is the rise of people’s assemblies, which first arose in the protests but were kept alive as community forums. Both the strengths and weaknesses of these assemblies were described in *Jacobin* by Jacqueline Villarrubia-Mendoza and Roberto Vélez-Vélez on August 24:

Organizers... make clear that this is not a space for political parties to push their political agendas, but for members of civil society as private individuals to present ideas and proposals for the achievement of transformative social change that emerges from the people. While many of the assemblies have participants with experience in assembly procedures—and the intricate parliamentary process—a significant number of participants are new to the scene, making for a space of innovation and experimentation within the democratic exercise.

The two parties of the Puerto Rican ruling elite have argued for decades about Puerto Rico’s political status in relation to the US, while ignoring other economic and social needs of the working class. The recent mass movement will hopefully create the space for the Puerto Rican working class to push for its own solution to the island’s relationship with the US, while also addressing the working class’s social and economic needs.

As mass anger against Trump continues to mount, the example set by the Puerto Rican working class can serve as a model for the resistance to Trump, which does not need to be limited by the speed of impeachment proceedings in the US Congress. The experience of this summer demonstrates that large protests and mass strikes could provide the energy that pushes the impeachment proceedings forward and, in the end, could be the force that drives Trump out, regardless of where the legal process is. ■

Mark Rafferty is an activist with Seattle DSA and an organizer with United Auto Workers Local 412

LA Teachers' Strike Wins Big

Interview with Union Vice President Cecily Myart-Cruz

After the upsurge of strikes by teachers in Republican-led states, the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) organized a major strike of their own. The LA strike stands out not only for taking place in the second largest school district in the country, or for happening in a Democrat-controlled city and state, but because of the demands the strike won, including important anti-racist measures. These victories included smaller class sizes, reduced standardized testing, a full-time nurse in every school, additional counselors and librarians, an end to racist “random searches,” and the establishment of an immigrant defense fund. The militant, democratic, community-oriented strategies of the rank-and-file group that took over the union in 2014 proved to be very effective.

Cecily Myart-Cruz is the Vice President of UTLA, and she was a speaker at the DSA National Convention in August. DSA Convention delegate RAMY KHALIL had the opportunity to sit down with her to find out more about how the union won and discuss some key issues facing the labor movement.

RAMY You helped form a left-wing group in your union. Why did you decide to do that?

CECILY Yes, Union Power Caucus, which we still have today. In 2011 people in this progressive group filed an initiative called “The Schools LA Students Deserve,” and that was before we got into office. It passed with 77%. We passed this initiative with 77% of the vote! [But] the union president shelved it, just said that we don’t have to do that. That told us that things need to change.

Then in 2013 Alex [Caputo-Pearl] told me, “I’m planning to run for president and I’d like you to run for VP.” I was like, “that sounds interesting, but no, because I am a consummate teacher and I want to be teaching my middle school kids.” He asked me three times and finally, a friend of mine said, “Cecily, you go really hard in the paint for students and community and parents for the union. If you

could just do the union stuff all the time you’d impact the lives of so many.” I thought about that, and I told Alex “okay, I’m down to run.” We assembled a team and we got into the race.

RAMY Did you change the culture of the union, not just at the top but among the rank-and-file membership?

CECILY Yes, the biggest thing we did was school site visits. We have 925 school sites and we went out to the school sites and practiced a model of 80/20—80% listening, 20% talking. We would get in there and people are like “I’ve worked here 25 years and I’ve never seen a union officer!” or “I don’t care, the union hasn’t done shit for me.”



Cecily Myart-Cruz, Vice President of the United Teachers of Los Angeles

We're listening to it, not getting defensive just actually listening and taking notes. But we're not gonna third party the union, we are the union, together. I hear you, but how are we going to become solution-based? What do you need from UTLA so we can move?

In the first few months, including staff, we were able to hit like over 800 schools for real. I think the first rally put out 17,000 people, and there were people that came out that hadn't come out to something in 20 years. That's where we knew that things were changing.

RAMY How did you take up the demands of the teachers, and also of students, parents, and the community?

CECILY We did the same listening sessions with students, parents, and community because we wanted them to be active participants in our work. They were key.

For example, we all wanted to end random searches, which we know statistically are not really random but target students of color. We've been asking [the school district] to end it, and they agreed to a pilot program where 28 schools won't have any random searches. The students felt that was a victory, but we didn't stop there, we kept pushing. This June they conceded that starting in 2021, [there will be] no more random searches throughout the district.

We also wanted a million dollars to create an immigrant defense fund, because we have a few thousand teachers and students who are undocumented that are scared. The struggle this year is going to be implementing that and all of our wins.

We had direct action where the coalition of parents, students, and community orgs would pick a target and go to that house and blast them at night. They did that for the school board president, and she called the police on them and said "How dare you?! My family is here!" Well, you live here too, and you're a target.

They had the megaphones out in the rain and it was great. They went to a privatizer's home, they went to our superintendent's home, and he was mad as hell.

RAMY What do you think of charter schools?

CECILY In Los Angeles in the last 10 years, we've had 287% charter growth. When charters started, they were supposed to interface with the public schools and share what they're doing that's different that we could do in a public school.

That did not happen. It became where the district is broken on purpose. They create a crisis, they starve your school, and then they blame the educators. That's the whole play-book of the privatizer. Six hundred million dollars comes out of our general fund every year to fund the charters in the district. That is crazy insane.

We are organizing charter school teachers because they're workers just like us, and we have to organize the unorganized. When we went out on strike, the charter school Accelerated [whose teachers are] UTLA members, went out on strike for 8 days. We held strong picket lines there with them as well, and they won their demands, which is unheard of. That was the first strike in California of charter schools.

RAMY Many candidates want unions' support. What do you think of the presidential candidates?

CECILY As a black biracial woman Kamala Harris is not my candidate because she's criminalized black people, she's criminalized black youth, and that's a problem for me. Cory Booker's a black man. He's a corporate Democrat. That is not a choice for me. He sat at many lunches introducing [Trump's education secretary] Betsy DeVos who doesn't know anything about education.

People are afraid to call out Democrats being corporate Democrats. We have a ton in the California Congress who take corporate and charter industry money and then say "oh, but I'm going to help you." You're not doing nothing for me. We have charter bills we can't get you to pass because you are afraid because you got charter money. Now that's not the politician for me.

If you're speaking up on parent rights and community rights; you're not afraid to say Black Lives Matter, real education and full funding; then we'll talk. We have a statewide bill coming up called "Schools and Communities First" [to restore \$11 billion to education by ending a commercial property tax loophole]. If you are a politician and you are not standing up for Schools and Communities First, to hold corporations accountable that slip through this [tax] loophole, then you are not a friend to public education.

You can go to any of the 925 work sites and you can ask "Who's Eli Broad? Who's John Arnold? Who are the Koch brothers?" and they know who are the enemies, who is on our side. So when we talk about politicians, we ask: are you standing with us, or are you standing with the billionaires? Which one? Which side are you on? ■

Fighting for Trans Rights

The documentary *The Most Dangerous Year* was dedicated to Leelah Alcord, a 15 year-old transgender girl who killed herself, leaving a note pleading for us to “Fix society. Please.”

Bridget Osborn

What motivates a person to become an activist? It is often a deeply personal reason, and for a group of parents in Washington State, it was their love of their children. Their story is told by Vlada Knowlton in her documentary *The Most Dangerous Year*, which highlights families with transgender children and their struggle to maintain civil rights for transgender people during the year 2016, when several discriminatory bathroom bills were introduced in Washington State.

The people behind these bathroom bills used fear to gather support, falsely claiming that the current law encouraged sexual predators to dress as the opposite gender under false pretenses to enter a bathroom and sexually assault someone. They promoted this fear tactic despite the fact that they were well aware that there was not one documented case of this scenario during the ten years that transgender rights have been legally protected in Washington state.

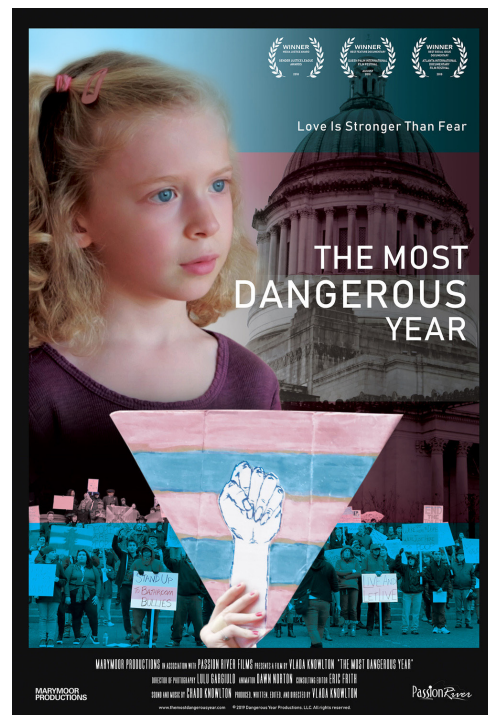
Many supporters of these bills have never met an openly transgender person and were unaware that they had already been sharing public restrooms with transgender people their entire lives. Nor did they acknowledge that forcing people to use the bathroom of the gender assigned at birth would be impossible to enforce.

This lack of understanding, exposure and education was an essential part of the problem, a problem that Aidan Key, founder of Gender Diversity, attempts to address by traveling the country to educate communities about transgender issues. Aidan Key was instrumental in organizing against the bill, and in the movie he is shown educating Snohomish County School District staff on the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation, an area of frequent misunderstanding.

Most people come to accept transgender kids once they understand that accepting a young child who is transgender is only about accepting their gender identity. Researchers explain that people generally realize their gender identity by age three to five, whereas people do not realize who they are sexually attracted to until closer to their teen years, or even later.

Ultimately, the anti-trans bill was voted down narrowly (losing by just one vote), but this was followed closely by another discriminatory bathroom bill, Initiative 1515, sponsored by the group “Just Want Privacy.”

As Just Want Privacy gained support for I-1515, the families with transgender kids joined the Washington Won’t



The Most Dangerous Year. Directed by Vlada Knowlton, 2019, 1 hr 30 min.



Discriminate campaign. These families began telling their personal stories in front of large audiences, speaking at churches, community centers and on local news and radio shows in order to show the human face behind transgender families.

Personal stories combined with the experience of meeting transgender kids and their families had a powerful

impact. There were many tears from audience members after these families spoke about fears of discrimination against their children.

Before learning that the initiative failed, Vlada implied that love always wins and that just by accepting their kids they had already won. This is reminiscent of the expression “love trumps hate.”

People want to believe the world is a safe place and deny the fact that our society affords us no control over many aspects of our lives. Once we acknowledge this fact, we either fall into despair or realize the necessity of changing society.

This specific fight was won, in part, because brave families with transgender kids decided to organize together and publicly share their personal stories. My hope is for people to see the power in telling their stories so more will join in to help increase acceptance of the trans community. ■

Bridget Osborn is a hospice nurse, a member of the Washington State Nurses Association and the mother of a transgender child.

Letter to the Editor



Accuracy, Please!

The book review of *No Shortcuts* in the last issue of this magazine has one glaring mistake which deserves a response.

In his review, Philip Locker wrote, “McAlevey locates workers, not staff or advocates, as the agency for a powerful labor movement. But she does not present workers as the agent for overcoming the failed policies of the current union leadership and forging an alternative strategy for rebuilding labor.” He was agreeing with another review by Mike Parker who made similar points.

This seems inaccurate to me. McAlevey devotes a lengthy chapter of her book to describe the lessons of the formation of the radical CORE caucus in the Chicago Teachers Union, how it challenged the establishment leadership, took over the union and led a successful strike in 2012. This is the touchstone ex-

ample that draws out all the lessons that Locker and Parker claim are not present in McAlevey’s book.

McAlevey has gone on to back up her dedication to rank-and-file caucus organizing with on-the-ground work. The CORE caucus has since organized a network of rank-and-file educators caucuses called UCORE (United Caucuses of Rank-and-file Educators), and McAlevey has done consulting work with some of those caucuses as well. This includes the Philadelphia Working Educators caucus which has already succeeded in organizing to win millions of dollars to combat toxic building conditions and is poised to possibly win in the upcoming election for union leadership.

I agree with Locker’s other critiques including the absence of a clear strategy when it comes to the need to build a working-class political party, but this point seemed to me a strawman which didn’t align with the reality of the book.

— Whitney Kahn
Seattle Education Association member

What do you think? We welcome letters and feedback. info@ReformAndRevolution.org

The Reform & Revolution caucus of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) stands in the revolutionary socialist tradition which fights to end economic inequality, racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression.

The resurgence of socialist ideas and the explosive growth of DSA represent the biggest opportunity in decades to build a mass socialist movement in the United States. Our caucus stands for building DSA into a mass socialist party rooted in the struggles of the working class and the oppressed. We also seek to contribute to the construction of an organized Marxist current within DSA which is committed to international socialism.

Our magazine strives to provide a forum for lively debate on the program and strategy that social movements need, drawing on lessons from past struggles. We seek to contribute to a living Marxism that analyzes new developments in society and engages in the ideological debates facing the left in the 21st century.

A central question activists are grappling with is the relationship between fighting for reforms and the need to fundamentally change the whole system. Our name is taken in honor of the answer that the famous Marxist Rosa Luxemburg gave to this question: "Between social reforms and

revolution there exists for [the Marxist movement] an inseparable connection. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim."

We view the capitalist system—with its nonstop global competition for profits and power—as the main driver behind inequality, oppression, and the climate crisis. We stand for bringing the major corporations that dominate the economy into public ownership and replacing the anarchy of the market with democratic economic planning in order to meet the needs of people and the planet.

Capitalism is fundamentally undemocratic because the real levers of power are in the hands of billionaires who control the economy, the mass media, the government, and the state, including the army, courts, and the police. We advocate for a dramatic expansion of democracy where all aspects of society—including our workplaces, neighborhoods and schools—are democratically run by popular assemblies and workers councils that are elected and subject to recall.

If you want to resist Trump and the whole billionaire class, if you want to fight all forms of oppression, join DSA at dsausa.org! If you also want to find out more about joining the Reform & Revolution caucus of DSA, please email us at info@ReformAndRevolution.org

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