



How Can We Win
Bernie's "Political Revolution"?
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WHAT WE STAND FOR

Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ No budget cuts to education and social services! Full funding for all community needs. A major increase in taxes on the rich and big business, not working people. The federal government should bail out states to prevent cuts and layoffs.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, health care, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour, adjusted annually for cost of living increases, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Cancel student debt. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower teacher-student ratios. Stop the focus on high stakes testing and the drive to privatize public education.
- ✦ Free, high quality health care for all. Replace the failed for-profit insurance companies with a publicly funded single-payer system as a step toward fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ Stop home foreclosures and evictions. For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ A minimum guaranteed weekly income of \$600/week for the unemployed, disabled, stay-at-home parents, the elderly, and others unable to work.
- ✦ Repeal all anti-union laws like Taft-Hartley. For democratic unions run by the rank-and-file to fight for better pay, working conditions, and social services. Full-time union officials should be regularly elected and receive the average wage of those they represent.
- ✦ No more layoffs! Take bankrupt and failing companies into public ownership and retool them for socially necessary green production.
- ✦ Shorten the workweek with no loss in pay and benefits; share out the work with the unemployed and create new jobs.

Environmental Sustainability

- ✦ Fight climate change. Organize mass protests and civil disobedience to block the Keystone XL oil pipeline, coal export terminals, and fracking. Massive public investment in renewable energy and efficiency technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low-fare, high-speed, accessible transit.
- ✦ Public ownership of the big energy companies. All workers in polluting industries should be guaranteed retraining and new living-wage jobs in socially useful green production.

Equal Rights for All

- ✦ Fight discrimination based on race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, and all other forms of prejudice. Equal pay for equal work.

- ✦ Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ Build a mass movement against police brutality and the institutional racism of the criminal justice system. Invest in rehabilitation, job training, and living-wage jobs, not prisons! Abolish the death penalty. Black Lives Matter.
- ✦ Fight sexual harassment, violence against women, and all forms of sexism.
- ✦ Defend a woman's right to choose whether and when to have children. For a publicly funded, single-payer health care system with free reproductive services, including all forms of birth control and safe, accessible abortions. Comprehensive sex education. Paid maternity and paternity leave. Fully subsidized, high-quality child care.
- ✦ Equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, including same-sex marriage.

Money for Jobs and Education. Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, the NDAA, and all other attacks on democratic rights.

Break with the Two Parties of Big Business

- ✦ For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people, and activists from workplace, environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and social movement organizations should stop funding and supporting the Democratic and Republican Parties and instead organize independent left-wing, anti-corporate candidates and coalitions as a first step toward building a workers' party.

Socialism and Internationalism

- ✦ Capitalism produces poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, and war. We need an international struggle against this system.
- ✦ Repeal corporate "free trade" agreements, which mean job losses and a race to the bottom for workers and the environment.
- ✦ Solidarity with the struggles of workers and oppressed peoples internationally: An injury to one is an injury to all.
- ✦ Take into public ownership the top 500 corporations and banks that dominate the U.S. economy. Run them under the democratic management of elected representatives of the workers and the broader public. Compensation to be paid on the basis of proven need to small investors, not millionaires.
- ✦ A democratic socialist plan for the economy based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people and the environment. For a socialist United States and a socialist world. ✦

WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

Katie Quarles, RN Board of Directors Minnesota Nurses Association* (personal capacity)



I am a socialist because, as a nurse caring for some of the sickest and most vulnerable within our community, I refuse to stand by and watch this health care system put the interests of profit before the health of the community.

Far too many people in this country don't have access to basic preventative medicine. Their only access to the health care system is through the emergency room - and that can come at the cost of bankruptcy due to medical bills.

As a nurse, I'm a patient advocate - not only for the patients I am caring for on a given night, but for the health of the entire community.

As a trade unionist, I see my role, and that of the nurses' union, as standing up for safe and quality patient care against the cost-saving measures of the health care industry.

But truly standing up for our patients and the health of our communities also means standing up against poverty wages, unemployment, homelessness, environmental destruction, and for the type of society

that doesn't make people work themselves to death at three part-time jobs for over 70 hours a week.

Our current capitalist society puts the profit needs of the very few before the lives of everyone else. Sure, reforms have been won to improve things, and we need to keep fighting for more, but in the end, the logic of this system will always try and pull the power and money back into the hands of the wealthy and the elite - unless we radically change the system once and for all and take the power into our hands as workers, unemployed workers, and trade unionists. We can run a democratic society on the principles of solidarity and environmental justice.

I am a socialist because I am a nurse. ✦

Quebec Public Sector Strike

400,000 Walk Out

The following is based on reports from SocialistWorld.net. Check back often for updates on the situation in Quebec.

On December 9, over 400,000 public sector workers downed tools across Quebec, in the biggest general strike movement in Canadian history. Most schools, hospitals, other public services, and ministries were shut down in a gigantic demonstration of force of the Quebec labor movement.

Despite the lack of a downturn during the Great Recession, neoliberal policies - budget cuts and attacks on wages and working conditions - have been pursued by every major governing party. However, in Quebec, workers, students, and communities have fought back since the beginning.

Since the magnificent student movement in 2012, budget cuts and attacks on public sector workers are increasingly decried by citizen groups. A recent poll showed that 64% of people in Quebec believe their government does a "poor job of managing" its negotiations with labor, with only 28% supporting it.

The multiple public sector unions are united in an alliance known as the "Common Front," which includes the same student unions that organized the student strikes in 2012. In the conflict

with the government, two important issues remain to be settled: pensions and salaries. The government wants to settle without spending a penny, but the Common Front's mandate is to stop the impoverishment of public sector workers. The purchasing power of workers has not matched cost-of-living increases for the past 10 years. Though the government recently demonstrated a willingness to increase our salaries, it wishes to finance this with our retirement funds.

In 2012, while losing control to the student movement, the Quebec government passed a draconian "special law" to declare an effective police state. If the current government follows suit, it may be throwing oil on the fire, as happened in 2012, when the popular reaction to the special law forced the government to hold an election and cancel the law.

Alternative Socialiste, a sister organization of Socialist Alternative and affiliated to the Committee for a Workers International, argues to continue the strike wave - defying any decree - or to call days of national disturbance by organizing occupations and blockades against the political and economic elite to thereby demonstrate that the government, whatever its strategy, will not stop us. ✦

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Kshama Sawant Hosts February 27 People's Assembly

“If We Organize and Fight, We Can Win”

Patrick Ayers

Now that we've defended Kshama's seat on the City Council, let's get organized to continue the fight for an affordable city for all.

Against a flood of corporate cash, and with the support of over 600 activists, 30 unions, and dozens of progressive organizations, Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant was re-elected in November to another term on the Seattle City Council.

Our campaign put the interests of working people first. We advocated urgent solutions to the city's housing affordability crisis. We rejected corporate cash and built a grassroots campaign that knocked on 90,000 doors and made 170,000 phone calls.

Our victory puts us in a strong position to organize and win more in 2016 and beyond, including 12 weeks paid parental leave, stronger taxes on developers, tenants' rights, a millionaires' tax, and more.

That's why, on February 27, Kshama will be hosting a People's Assembly to Make Seattle Affordable for All at City Hall. The People's Assembly will bring together trade unionists, tenants, Black Lives Matter activists, students, and others to discuss the way forward on the issues that are most important to working people.



A packed Seattle council chamber during budget deliberations. photo credit: Clay Showalter

The Seattle Model

Kshama's two years in office have transformed city politics. But how?

She only has a single vote on the Council, and she's often blocked by the conservative Council majority: all Democratic Party members, most of them with close ties to the corporate establishment. But, by basing her office on movement-building and linking up with other grassroots efforts, she has been able to help make things happen.

Take, for example, the biggest victory: the \$15 an hour minimum wage. Not a single Seattle City Councilmember supported a \$15 an hour minimum wage before our 2013 election victory.

Kshama's 2013 campaign and grassroots victory over a

16-year incumbent made \$15 minimum wage the biggest issue in the city.

Despite this support, we kept the pressure up from below. We wasted no time after the election victory. We packed the inauguration with hundreds of \$15 an hour supporters, and we launched 15 Now as a grassroots organization that anyone could join.

Our movement threatened to file our own credible \$15 an hour ballot initiative if the mayor and City Council failed to deliver. Within six months of Kshama taking office, the City Council unanimously voted for the first \$15 minimum wage legislation in the country. The sole socialist had shaken the establishment.

Lessons for Building the Movement Today

The council office helped win many more victories, and all of them relied on the active involvement of ordinary people who organized neighbors, packed city council meetings, marched, rallied, and went door-to-door.

This “Seattle model” – grassroots movement-building and independent working-class politics – shows how working people nationally can challenge the domination of the 1% over politics. As Kshama explains, “you don't have to be a socialist to fight for workers' rights, but it definitely helps.”

Kshama and Socialist Alternative unapologetically defend working-class people. This means not accepting the framework of a profit-driven system: “You can't represent both the big corporations and working people,” says Seattle's socialist council member.

Linking the day-to-day struggles for improvements to the struggle for a fundamental democratic socialist change, Kshama's party, Socialist Alternative, has been the backbone of her campaigns. There's a huge opening to build a fighting working-class movement and a whole new kind of politics in Seattle and across the U.S. Please join us on February 27, and also consider joining Socialist Alternative. ☘

Kshama Sawant Column 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave



photo credit: Clay Showalter

The value to parents and newborns of paid parental leave is well-understood and uncontroversial. Research shows that paid parental leave leads to better health for newborns, better educational outcomes for kids, more equitable access to the workforce and higher incomes for women, greater participation in parenting by fathers, and lower occurrences of domestic violence.

Paid parental leave is a gender equity issue, an educational issue, and a social justice issue.

The global standard is a minimum of 12 weeks, and many countries provide significantly more. We need to fight for this benefit in cities, states, and nationwide. Earlier this year, Seattle's City Council unanimously passed a four-week benefit – an important step forward, but still inadequate.

During the city budget discussions, we moved an amendment to immediately provide 12 weeks paid parental leave for all workers employed by the city as a step toward a citywide 12-weeks ordinance next year.

On November 23, the conservative majority of the Council blocked this motion with a 5-to-4 vote. Occuring twenty days after the election, it's a clear sign that campaigning talk about gender and social justice is over.

Back to business for corporate politicians means back to business for working people, as well: We will not drop this issue. But to come back and win, we need to build again on our own strength: the organized movements of working people.

Kshama Sawant is a Seattle City Councilmember and a member of Socialist Alternative

Seattle City Budget

Corporate Agenda Trumps Needs of Homeless, Working People

Socialist Alternative's Seattle Councilmember, Kshama Sawant, again pushed hard to win some concessions for working people during the city's budget cycle. 300 people attended the second “People's Budget Town Hall” to demand significant changes for affordable housing and racial, gender, and social justice.

For example, \$2.3 million was added in funding for homeless services. \$1 million was added to fund public transit passes for low-income public school students.

However, significant changes brought forward by Kshama were blocked. While the mayor and the Council declared a “state of emergency” on homelessness, Kshama's budget amendment to spend \$10 million to fund shelter for an additional 1,000 people received only one additional vote. All seven others voted “no,” while 3,800 people were counted on the streets without shelter in Seattle's last count of homelessness as of January 2015.

In a city with growing income inequality,

a crisis of affordable housing, and now an official state of emergency around homelessness, the overall budget followed the “business as usual” approach.

Explaining her vote against the budget as a whole, Kshama stated, “I would support a budget that taxes the rich and big business to end the housing crisis, to end homelessness, to begin the process of creating a world-class mass transit system in Seattle. It would use the city's bonding capacity to contract with every affordable housing nonprofit and

government agency in the city to massively expand the city's supply of affordable housing as quickly as possible. It would address bloated city executive salaries, it would prioritize job programs, mental health and drug treatment before the punitive aspects of the criminal justice system.”

“To get there, to fulfill our needs, we need to continue strengthening grassroots progressive movements. Our movement needs to elect an independent left-wing majority to the Council,” Kshama concluded. ☘

Fear of Terrorism Grows

Political Polarization Deepens

Tom Crean

In the waning days of 2015, the corporate media has been filled with wall-to-wall coverage of Donald Trump's call to prevent any Muslims from entering the U.S. While the vast majority of ordinary people reject Trump's racist rantings, there has been a shift in the mood of the population in the wake of the Paris and San Bernadino attacks carried out by ISIS supporters. According to a *New York Times/CBS News* poll in early December, "Americans are more fearful about the likelihood of another terrorist attack than at any other time since the weeks after September 11, 2001" (12/10/2015). Another recent poll shows a majority support sending ground troops to Syria.

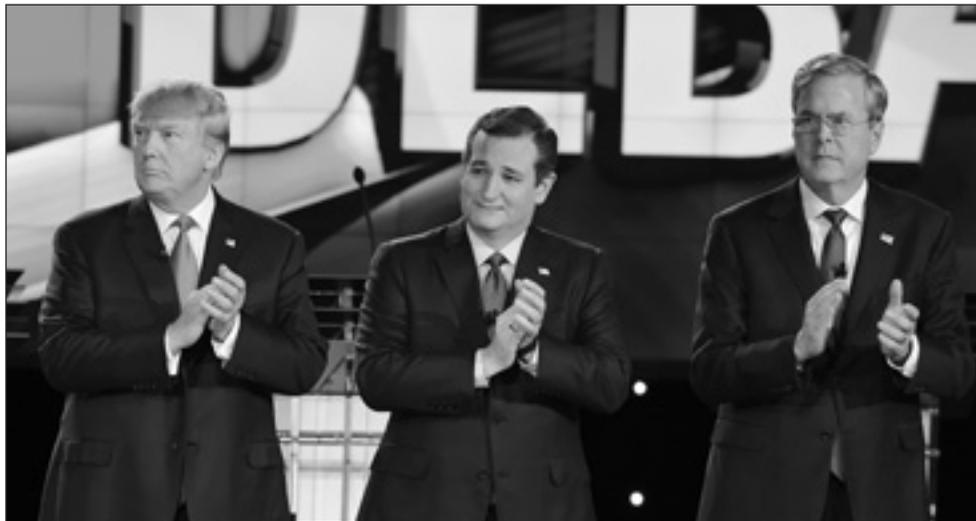
While there is a growing fear of terrorism and support for military action, it does not negate the deeper overall shift to the left in society that we have seen in the whole past period. This is reflected in the increasing openness to socialism – according to Gallup, nearly 60% of Democratic voters now say they would be prepared to support a socialist for president – as well as overwhelming support for a \$15 minimum wage, increasing taxation on the rich, and for progressive social reforms like marriage equality. Since Occupy burst forth in 2011 in revolt against corporate domination and massive inequality, there has been a re-emergence of social struggle. The sharpest expression of this today is the ongoing Black Lives Matter protests, which have created a real crisis for the establishment, particularly in a number of major cities. Even the growth of right populism can be a spur to building a fight-back on the streets in this highly polarized environment.

Obama's Foreign Policy Falls Apart

One of the factors which is giving the right its current opening is the Obama administration's incoherent policy in the Middle East. While the Republican candidates for president ratchet up the rhetoric on who would be tougher on ISIS – while having to take no responsibility for the consequences – Obama is trying to avoid being sucked further into the Iraq/Syria quagmire, with all its tripwires. As Socialist Alternative pointed out in its statement after San Bernadino:

"Precisely what ISIS wants is to draw the West into a full-scale military intervention into Syria and Iraq. It also welcomes right-wing attacks against Muslims in the West because it believes this will help draw alienated young Muslims toward their reactionary campaign. In this sense, the right and far right in the West and the jihadists have complementary agendas."

The problem is that U.S. capitalism and its representatives, like Obama, have no solution



Republican primaries are a trainwreck.

to the underlying causes of the conflict after fifteen years of nonstop military intervention in the region, which has led to massive chaos and helped create reactionary jihadist organizations like ISIS. Instead, the administration fights "half a war" in Iraq and Syria through aerial bombing, which will only bring further recruits to ISIS while not satisfying those who want tougher action. Meanwhile in Afghanistan, Obama has committed to keeping nearly 10,000 troops in the country as the threat from the Taliban grows.

Trump in the Spotlight

Since San Bernadino and his incendiary remarks about Muslims, Trump's poll numbers have gone higher. The Republican establishment now faces an acute dilemma. It is not likely that Trump can win the nomination outright, but they are worried that Trump could remain a factor all the way to the Republican convention. In the absence of a clear candidate who has establishment support and can rally sections of the Republican base, this makes for possibly crippling internal division.

But if the establishment moves to block his path decisively, Trump is threatening to run as an independent, which could take large numbers of votes away from the Republicans in November 2016. This is a credible threat and even more worrying for the party establishment. At no point in recent political history has the formation of a hard-right political formation with a mass base seemed such a real possibility.

Fighting Right Populism

The crisis of capitalism has created massive social dislocation, including for large sections of the white working class. The rising fury against the establishment has caused a crisis in both major parties.

But it is not inevitable that this anger leads to the growth of a more virulent form

of right populism. In fact, it is the corporate leadership of the Democratic Party which, over time, has created the space for the right by abandoning the working class as a whole after the 1970s, supporting massive cuts in social programs and trade deals that destroyed hundreds of thousands of jobs. It is also the result of the lack of a working-class party that can put forward a clear alternative to corporate politics.

Supporting the corporate Democrats in elections and simply calling those workers who are supporting right-wing populists "crazy" will not work. As we have consistently pointed out, the way to fight right populism is to build a mass movement, centered on the social power of the working class, which unites all those it targets, including racial minorities, immigrants, trade unionists, women, and LGBTQIA people. Such a movement, starting as a fight against racism, xenophobia, and sexism, could become a challenge not just to the right but to the entire capitalist elite and its incessant attacks on working people and the poor. A recent example of a working-class-centered movement that helped to push back reactionary views was the mass mobilizations of immigrants in 2005-2006.

The Sanders Challenge

The divisions in the Democratic Party primaries may not be as sharp as in the Republican race, but they are, nonetheless, very real. Bernie Sanders' call for a political revolution against the billionaire class has found a massive echo among young people and a broad layer of workers. It is striking that he has higher favorability ratings among Republican voters than Hillary, and he has held huge rallies in "red" states. This shows the attraction of an explicit appeal to working-class interests.

Even if Sanders' campaign were to end now, his popularization of "democratic

socialism" to an audience of millions would represent a breach in the neoliberal wall and a massive step forward. But the fact that there have now been over 2,000,000 individual contributions to a campaign that refuses to accept corporate money points directly to the potential to build a new, independent political force representing the interests of the 99%. This is twice the number of individual contributions that Obama had received at this stage of his 2008 campaign!

Hillary Clinton's campaign has tried to bury Sanders under a corporate media avalanche that presents her nomination as inevitable. She has also done her utmost to repackage herself as a born-again progressive and to steer attention away from her record and all the corporate money behind her. But despite all this, Sanders' campaign has not been dented, and he remains ahead in the polls in New Hampshire.

As we explain elsewhere in this issue, we want to see the sharpest challenge possible to the Democratic Party establishment develop from Sanders' campaign. This requires beginning to build a new political force now around his campaign which can ignite the type of upheaval that is the only possible road to defeating Hillary. This would represent the outlines of a new left political party.

Social Struggle in 2016

The eruptions of anger by black people in Minneapolis after the police killing of Jamar Clark and, in Chicago, after the suppression of a video showing 17-year-old Laquan McDonald being shot 16 times show that the status quo is not viable. That Rahm Emanuel, "Mayor 1%" and Obama's former Chief of Staff, is now facing widespread calls to resign is the clearest expression of this.

Now, the Chicago Teachers Union, which went on strike in 2012 against Rahm with massive community support, has voted overwhelmingly to authorize strike action again, this time to stop the attempt to make teachers pay for the city's artificially created pension crisis. The fight in Chicago and Illinois against the drive to demolish the remaining power of the public sector unions by Republican Governor Rauner, backed to the hilt with massive amounts of hedge fund money – and seconded by Democrat Rahm – is crucial for workers around the country. This could shape up into the biggest battle for the labor movement since the fight against Scott Walker in Wisconsin in 2011.

The labor movement faces other critical challenges in 2016 including the *Friedrichs* case in front of the Supreme Court that would turn the entire public sector "right to work." The Trans-Pacific Partnership, which threatens jobs, workers' rights, and the

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Right Makes Gains

Aftermath of Paris Attacks

George Martin Fell Brown

The atrocities committed by ISIS in Paris on Friday, November 13 were one of the worst attacks in France since World War Two. Widely seen as “France’s 9/11,” the attacks have resulted in a wave of reaction in France and across Europe. However, this is also a contradictory situation because of the opposition to war in large sections of the population and the continuing struggle against austerity. The growth of the far right can also act as a spur to the left.

French president François Hollande responded to the Paris attacks by declaring a state of emergency, a grotesque crackdown on civil liberties, and ordering another, wider bombing onslaught on the ISIS-held town of Raqqa in Syria, carried out alongside the U.S. Their high-tech missiles – inflicting mass terror, death, and injury on civilians and ISIS personnel alike – will do nothing to prevent further terrorist attacks in the West.

The state of emergency directly cut across what would have been mass protests in Paris during the recent climate conference.

There has been a boost in support for the far-right French National Front (FN) of Marine Le Pen. In the first round of December’s regional elections, the FN got 28% of the



An informal memorial outside the Bataclan in Paris.

vote, more than doubling its support since 2012 and nearly taking the leadership in three of France’s biggest regions. Le Pen and the FN have been riding a wave of anti-refugee hysteria. Ultimately, the FN was defeated in the second round of the elections through tactical voting by mainstream parties, even though their absolute vote increased.

Beyond France

The impact of the Paris attacks has extended beyond France itself. There has been an increasing anti-refugee onslaught, both in terms of state policy and far-right violence. The German far-right PEGIDA has

grown, calling for action to stop “the Islamization of the West.” Meanwhile, the Swedish government reversed its refugee policies, from “refugees welcome” in September to practically closing the borders altogether. The right has also made big gains in Poland.

The march to war has also extended beyond France. In December, the British government voted in favor of military intervention in Syria against ISIS. This was met by the opposition of Jeremy Corbyn, the newly elected left-wing head of the Labour Party. Polls showed a majority of ordinary people in Britain oppose the bombing campaign,

and thousands protested in the streets. But right-wing Labour MPs openly defied Corbyn, voting with the Tories in favor of the war.

For Working-Class Unity

The lack of mass parties representing the interests of the working class has helped create the space for the growth of the far right, which frequently uses populist rhetoric. But the aftermath of Paris has also exposed the weakness of many of the existing forces presenting themselves as left. For example, in France itself, the Communist Party disgracefully voted for Hollande’s state of emergency and ban on demonstrations. Fortunately, the CGT, the main French trade union federation, was pressed from below to reject those attacks on civil liberties.

The current political situation in Europe will not last indefinitely, and the underlying questions posed by capitalism’s crisis and endless austerity will reassert themselves. Even before the Paris attacks, the defeat of the Greek struggle against austerity due to the treachery of Tsipras, the head of Syriza, had had a negative effect on the left. But Jeremy Corbyn’s victory in the leadership of the British Labour Party in September shows that working people can be won to a genuine left position when a clear lead is given.

Portugal also had a shift to the left in recent elections.

Working-Class Alternative

It isn’t possible for the imperialist powers to completely destroy ISIS militarily. In any case, weakening it through military blows won’t stop new jihadist groups and sectarian organizations from arising – as is happening globally anyway. Nor will crackdowns on immigration and civil liberties keep ordinary Europeans safe. Defeating ISIS can only be done by the working class and rural poor in Iraq and Syria, who need to build a united, non-sectarian struggle against all the local reactionary forces – all forms of oppression – as well as those further afield.

The workers’ movements in France, Europe, and elsewhere need to develop their own class-based internationalist position, completely independent of the interests and hypocrisy of the capitalist governments and ruling classes. This must include building workers’ unity and action against terrorism, xenophobia, wars, and the capitalist system itself – which, unable to meet the needs of the overwhelming majority of people, creates the breeding ground for these horrors. ☛

Paris Climate Agreement Reflects Pressure from Environmental Movement

Joshua Koritz

Finally, after two decades of warnings by climate scientists, an agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions has been signed by nearly 200 world leaders. While far inadequate to what is needed, environmental activists worldwide can take encouragement. It is because of their relentless efforts – 400,000 on the streets in NYC last year, over 750,000 marching worldwide this year, and 15,000 defying the ban on marches in Paris – that, for the first time, world leaders were forced to acknowledge the catastrophic risks posed by global warming as well as the political consequences if they continued to ignore it.

The agreement recognizes the need to stay below 2° Celsius, with aspiration to keep warming below 1.5° Celsius. However, the voluntarily set targets for reductions in emissions are nonbinding and don’t kick in until 2020. If all of the targets

are hit – which would be unprecedented – global temperatures will still rise by 3.5° Celsius, two degrees more than scientists say is safe.

It also creates a \$100 billion per year fund to assist developing countries in mitigating current climate change impacts and developing renewable energy infrastructure. The response from India, however – that they will continue their plans to double down on coal – suggests \$100 billion a year is not nearly enough to stop poor countries from using fossil fuels.

Who Is Responsible for Global Warming?

According to Oxfam, “the only beneficiaries of inadequate climate action in Paris and beyond are a much smaller elite with vested interests in the continuation of a high carbon and deeply unequal global economy,” (Oxfam, “Extreme Carbon Inequality”). Oil companies are among the largest and most profitable corporations in the world and contribute heavily to

political campaigns. Those politicians bought by big oil send their negotiators to these climate summits, where they fight each other to protect the interests of their paymasters.

What Is the Way Forward?

The crisis is real and immediate. The extreme flooding occurring as widely as from Oregon to India during the climate summit was a stark reminder of this.

To prevent climate catastrophe, working people must unite and fight to limit the power of the energy industry. Ultimately, this means taking the energy industry out of the hands of those who run it for profit and ignore the environmental consequences. In the hands of the working class, the tools and resources of the fossil-fuel corporations can be used to efficiently develop and deploy renewable energy technology on a mass scale, ensuring a just transition for all workers and an ecologically sustainable future for all. ☛

How Can We Win Bernie

“Political Revolution”

Ty Moore

The political “experts” in the corporate media are united on at least one thing: Bernie Sanders is too far left to win. And, of course, this “common sense” argument plays perfectly into the central message of Hillary Clinton apologists. They endlessly lecture the left-leaning Democratic Party voters that, even if you agree more with Bernie’s democratic socialism, to beat the Republicans you’ve got to vote for Hillary’s corporate centrism.

This argument is the main thing keeping Clinton ahead of Sanders in the Democratic primary polling. Understandably, with Trump holding a steady lead among Republicans even as he sharpens his hateful attacks on Muslims, immigrants, people of color, women, and workers, many want to do everything possible to push back this right-wing threat.

The only problem is, the so-called experts and Clinton apologists have it completely wrong. You don’t fight fire with fire. And you don’t fight right-wing populism with corporate politics. Wall Street candidates like Clinton are funded by the same deep pockets that back the Republican Party, and this corporate establishment rests on maintaining inequality and divisions among working people.

Understanding the nature of right-populism is the first step to fighting it. The reality is, if the left is corralled into supporting a corporate centrist like Clinton, if we can’t offer a bold, fighting, working-class alternative to the far right in the 2016 elections, the political space for Trump and his ilk will continue to grow.

A real political alternative for the 99% must be combined with building a mass movement of workers, people of color, immigrants, women, and all those targeted by Trump’s hateful bigotry and the wider threat of right-wing populism.

The reality is that Bernie’s call for a “political revolution against the billionaire class” is widely popular far beyond the Democratic Party base, as are his core policy proposals like taxing big business to fund jobs, education, clean energy, and health care. In fact, while Sanders still trails Hillary Clinton among Democratic Party voters, when matched up against Trump and other top Republican candidates, Sanders consistently polls as well as or better than Clinton, despite the disadvantage of having far lower name recognition!

While it’s clear that Sanders faces steep odds to win the White House – and even steeper odds to win his package of far-reaching reforms – the so-called experts and Clinton apologists are completely wrong about the reasons why.



What’s blocking us from winning Bernie’s political revolution isn’t the mythical “centrist majority” among working-class voters.

Despite the endless nonsense from corporate media talking heads, the real problem is no mystery to most politically conscious workers. It’s the entrenched power of corporate America and its stranglehold on our political system, including both the Democratic and Republican parties. And don’t forget the corporate media monopoly which, despite widening options online, remains the dominant source of news and exerts huge influence over popular consciousness.

Popularizing Socialism

Even before the first primary, the Sanders campaign has achieved a historic breakthrough for the U.S. left. It has opened up a mass discussion of socialist ideas and demonstrated that it’s possible for a grassroots movement to challenge the corporate domination of politics. Nearly a million people have donated to Sanders – more than any candidate in U.S. history at this stage in the election – and his campaign has demonstrated an unprecedented scale of grassroots enthusiasm.

Polls repeatedly demonstrate that a majority

of voters support the core of Sanders’ policy proposals over those of Clinton, including single-payer health care, taxing the rich to fully fund schools and services, massive investment in clean energy, a major jobs program, a \$15 an hour minimum wage, an end to the War on Drugs and mass incarceration of people of color, and more.

We would go further than Sanders. As Kshama Sawant, Seattle’s recently re-elected socialist councilmember argued in the previous issue of *Socialist Alternative*, “even to carry through these basic measures means completely breaking the stranglehold of Wall Street and the biggest corporations over society. This requires more than breaking up the big banks or restoring the Glass-Steagall Act, although such measures would certainly be positive steps. It would entail bringing the big banks into public ownership, along with the big energy companies and other key parts of the economy.”

We have also pointed consistently to our differences with Sanders on foreign policy: we do not think, for example, that a coalition of despotic Middle Eastern regimes is the key to rooting out ISIS. We base ourselves on the interests of working people abroad as well as at home. But we recognize that Sanders’ central appeal is the enormously positive pro-working-class

demands he has put forward.

Defeating Hillary

We’re not Democrats, but we want to see Sanders defeat Hillary. Despite Sanders’ decision to run in the Democratic Party primary – a decision we opposed – a Sanders victory would usher in a deep political crisis for American capitalism, create a sharp split in the Democratic Party, and open a space for a historic wave of struggle to challenge the corporate monopoly over U.S. politics.

However, as we warned from the outset of Sanders’ campaign, there is nothing democratic about the Democratic Party’s primaries. It’s an illusion that Sanders can win this rigged game against Wall Street’s candidate, Hillary Clinton, by simply putting forward popular ideas and playing by the normal “rules.” Defeating Clinton will require sparking an upheaval against the Democratic Party establishment on a far greater scale than Bernie has yet achieved. The party establishment, for example, has conspired to ensure that all remaining debates are at times that will generate far smaller audiences than the 15 million who watched the first debate. They are also lining up the “superdelegates” – unelected party officials who are approximately

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one-fifth of the total – who could be used to swing the Democratic convention to Hillary if it's close.

A #Movement4Bernie Is Needed

Understanding the corporate character of the Democratic Party is vital if the movement behind Sanders hopes to run a viable campaign. Overcoming one of the two most powerful political institutions – alongside the Republicans – of corporate America will require that Sanders build a completely independent political force. Effectively, this means shedding the traditional staff-driven campaign model, which relegates most supporters into bystanders until called upon to donate and volunteer.

Instead, what's needed is a bold appeal for Sanders supporters to self-organize into a real mass movement. It means building a powerful new grassroots political force capable of waging a fierce battle against the Democratic Party machine at every level of American politics. Effectively this means building a new left political party out of Sanders' campaign that can continue to organize and fight beyond the elections, win or lose.

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Who Does Hillary Serve?



James Parker and Tony Wilsdon

Bernie Sanders' campaign calls for a political revolution against the billionaire class. He is rejecting all corporate money, and he said during the November 14 debate: "Here's my promise: Wall Street representatives will not be in my cabinet!" Bernie's openness to fighting back against a system where political and economic decisions are dictated by the billionaire class has had an electrifying effect on working-class and young voters.

Hillary is trying to package herself as Bernie-lite. She recently said to *The Late Show*, "We've got to get back to providing opportunities, we've got to get back to making the economy work for everybody, and we have to defend the progress we've made in women's rights and gay rights, and we have to protect voting and immigrant rights and everything else."

While Hillary is trying her hardest to rebrand herself and pull the wool over people's eyes, the stark underlying difference is shown by their campaign contributions. While Hillary's campaign is awash in corporate money, with Wall Street topping the charts, Bernie is rejecting big business contributions, relying instead on over 800,000 small donors and counting. So why is big business lining up behind Hillary if she's a born again progressive? Ample reasons can be found in Hillary's long political history, which speaks much louder than any progressive proclamations made on her website.

Financed by Wall Street

During Bill Clinton's presidency, where Bill and Hillary always worked very much as a team, the road was paved for

the deregulation of the financial market, which helped lead to the 2008 crisis. So when Hillary started her own political career, she had the instant backing of Wall Street. Her current campaign website declares that "Wall Street Should Work for Main Street," but when the banks collapsed in 2008, she sold out "Main Street" by voting for the bank bailouts. To date, her top five donors are Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, DLA Piper (a corporate law firm), JPMorgan Chase, and Morgan Stanley (*OpenSecrets.org*).

Hillary now claims that, as president, she would have the strongest program to hold Wall Street accountable, but would Wall Street executives be lining up behind her if they believed that were true? The investment industry has already given Hillary a total of \$5.5 million during this election campaign alone.

Warmonger

As a Senator, Hillary not only voted for Bush's Iraq War, but distinguished herself as a fierce advocate for it. She voted for the Patriot Act both times, helping to build the basis for the surveillance state we now have. As Secretary of State, Hillary consistently supported U.S. "allies," no matter how oppressive. During the Arab Spring, Hillary supported the brutal dictatorships of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Bahrain against the peaceful pro-democracy uprisings in those countries.

Attacks on the Poor

Perhaps the strongest progressive narrative around Hillary is that she is a populist fighter who for decades has been an advocate for families and children. Does this line up with her record?

When it comes to helping low-income families, Hillary

supported the repeal of welfare. She talked about undeserving, lazy parents to justify gutting the program. But, whatever she thinks about the parents, the reality is that 70% of the recipients of this program were innocent children who were left with limited or no benefits. This one act, arguably, did more harm to families and children in the U.S. than anything else in recent history.

"Tough On Crime"

Hillary helped Bill campaign for the "tough on crime" laws that created the mass incarceration system we have now. "We need more police," she said in 1994. "We need more and tougher prison sentences for repeat offenders. The 'three strikes and you're out' for violent offenders has to be part of the plan. We need more prisons to keep violent offenders for as long as it takes to keep them off the streets" (*Salon.com*, 4/13/2015). This has resulted in the highest prison incarceration rate in the world, and there are almost six million ex-felons who are deprived of their voting rights and face discrimination when seeking jobs and housing.

Many people are unaware of the instrumental role that Hillary and Bill played in building our current system of mass incarceration. Pushing harsher and harsher penalties for crimes related to poverty resulted in what many refer to as "The New Jim Crow," where currently 1 in 3 black men will go to prison at some point in their lifetimes.

Fighter for the Oppressed?

When it comes to the rights of LGBTQ people, Hillary says she is a fighter for gay rights, but as late as 2013 she maintained that marriage was between a man and a woman (*The Atlantic*, 6/13/2014). As regards the rights of undocumented workers, Hillary now says that she supports a pathway to citizenship, but in 2006 she voted for a Republican-backed bill to build a 700-mile wall on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Keystone XL

In another one of her numerous flip-flops in this electoral race, Clinton recently announced that she is opposed to the

Keystone XL pipeline. But as late as July 2015, she was still undecided on this widely despised project. Two big Canadian banks who are key investors in Keystone XL paid Clinton over \$1.6 million in speaking fees from 2014-2015, giving her ample reason to remain undecided until it was too late for her opinion to make a difference.

Corporate Trade Deals

This isn't Hillary's first time re-inventing her stances on issues. During her presidential bid in 2008, Barack Obama called her out during a debate for her opportunist flip-flop on NAFTA. "The fact is, she was saying great things about NAFTA until she started running for president," he said. As Secretary of State, Hillary then went on to support the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which has been called "NAFTA on steroids." She has spoken over 45 times in support of TPP over a five-year period before recently changing her stance.

Hillary is the only Democratic candidate not supporting a \$15 an hour minimum wage; instead, she only calls for \$12. This reluctance is consistent with Hillary Clinton's record on the Walmart Board of Directors from 1986-1992, when she did nothing to raise the wages of workers or combat the company's union-busting practices. While Hillary would like to pretend her Walmart days are behind her, her current campaign treasurer, Jose Villarreal, is a Walmart insider who was on their Executive Advisory Council until 2013.

Walmart's Candidate

While Hillary Clinton looks progressive in comparison to anyone in the Republican race, she has a long history of showing that she is not the candidate able to fight back against the advances of the right wing. It was disappointments with Obama that opened the door for Republican gains. Obama had promised to offer a change from the Bush administration, yet he packed his cabinet with Wall Street bankers. If elected, we won't get the new, progressive-looking Hillary Clinton. We will get what she has always delivered: a Hillary who serves the interests of Wall Street and the 1% over the needs of working people. ☹

Breaking Glass Ceilings, Reinforcing the Corporate Agenda

Clinton's Feminism

Jess Spear

One hundred years ago, women lacked the right to vote. Sixty years ago, women were mostly relegated to the role of housewife, with only a narrow range of occupations offered as alternatives to escape a life focused entirely on cooking, cleaning, and raising the children. Next year, the U.S. may see the election of its first female president, breaking through the final glass ceiling for women in U.S. politics.

Much as the election of Barack Obama was a historic marker in the fight for racial equality, to many the election of Hillary Clinton would represent a historic step forward in women gaining acceptance as equals to men in U.S. society. But what would be the tangible gains for women if Clinton were elected?

Unlike Barack Obama in 2008, Hillary Clinton is not an unknown entity. She has a long record in public office as First Lady, Senator, and Secretary of State from which we can gain insight into what a Clinton presidency would mean for women – and, in particular, working-class women.

Hillary's Record

As First Lady, and as recently as 2008, Clinton supported welfare “reform,” which gutted a New Deal program that provided assistance to impoverished families with children. The new program limited welfare payments to just five years and allowed states free rein to develop welfare programs that further restricted access. The new restrictions were meant to motivate people off the welfare rolls and into jobs. But, by allowing states that had reduced the number of welfare recipients to use the federal money for other purposes, it essentially incentivized state governments to cut off aid to poor families. At the time, three officials in the Department of Health and Human Services resigned in protest, citing concerns that the bill would significantly increase poverty. And it did just that.

When the economy tanked in 2007 and 2008, states – looking for money to deal with budget deficits – tightened restrictions for welfare to cut families from the welfare list, and the number of families without jobs – and, once their limit was reached, without cash assistance – increased dramatically. Women with children were particularly hurt. One in four single mothers – roughly four million women and children – was without a job and without aid during the recent recession, twice the previous rate (*NY Times*, 4/7/2012).

Despite Clinton's claim to be a feminist – and, now, an outsider – her record in office and her campaign platform reveal her to be a consistent supporter of corporate interests, with a splash of lofty feminist rhetoric on the side.



Hillary Clinton speaking at the Women's Leadership Forum.

Hillary Clinton has also championed “open markets” – and, though she has recently come out against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) due to mounting pressure from unions and environmental and social justice organizations – as Secretary of State she was one of the original drafters of the trade deal.

Free-trade deals and open markets discourage unionization and lead to lower wages for U.S. workers, which disproportionately hurts women, who make up a larger portion of the low-wage workforce and are already unequally paid.

On all these issues, Hillary has been a consistent advocate of the neoliberal policies – based on free trade and cutting down the size of the public sector – which have dominated the Democratic Party for decades.

Reproductive Rights

The Democratic Party lip service on abortion rights could fill a small library. And what they say to defend women's rights actually shows how successful the right wing has been in framing the debate. Hillary's mantra, “keep abortion safe, legal, and rare,” is a good example of this.

The reality is that access to safe abortions has dramatically decreased, particularly in Southern states. A new study revealed that up to 240,000 women in Texas had attempted self-induced abortions (*Guardian*, 11/17/2015). And as the accompanying article on the *Whole Women's Health v. Cole* case going before the Supreme Court

explains, the threat to reproductive rights is becoming even more serious. The activists in #ShoutOutYourAbortion who pushed back on the right's campaign against Planned Parenthood have the right idea. The only way women's rights will be defended and advanced is through a fight. In fact, it will require mass struggle, something the corporate Democrats consistently oppose.

Hillary 2.0: Feminist Outsider

The 2016 election cycle is occurring at a time when deep hatred of politics as usual and an anti-establishment mood is reaching fever pitch. These symptoms of the recession and unequal recovery create quite a dilemma for a career politician bankrolled by Wall Street. To complicate matters, Clinton is facing a serious challenge from the left from Bernie Sanders, whose core demands speak to the needs of working-class people, but also shuns corporate donations and has raised nearly \$30 million from over one million donations averaging \$30.

Increasingly, Clinton has had to use her gender to drum up support for her uninspiring campaign and to provide cover for her corporate-style politics. During the November 14 Democratic debate when Sanders posed the question, “why has Wall Street been the major campaign contributor to Hillary Clinton,” Clinton responded with, “I'm proud that, for the first time, a majority of my donors are women: 60%.” As if those women somehow cancel out the influence of millions from Wall Street bankers and hedge fund managers.

She's even tried to outrageously claim that her gender automatically makes her an outsider: “Folks want an outsider in this election ... Who can be more of an outsider

than a woman President?” (*The Today Show*, 10/5/2015). You could make the same argument for Republican candidate Carly Fiorina. As Clinton herself said, “people need to hold women's policies up to light and determine what their answers to problems would be before deciding to support them” (*Time*, 10/12/2015). Indeed, Clinton's gender, used with maximum effort by the campaign, should not distract working-class women and students from the substance of her policy proposals.

Despite Clinton's claim to be a feminist – and, now, an outsider – her record in office and her campaign platform reveal her to be a consistent supporter of corporate interests, with a splash of lofty feminist rhetoric on the side. Her past support for welfare reform, mass incarceration, charter schools, traditional marriage, and imperialist intervention and war are not blemishes on a long record fighting for women and the poor. They represent her political ideology, and her gender won't cover up the fact that they have resulted in and continue to cause the suffering of women and children here and across the world.

Working-Class Feminism

In contrast to Hillary Clinton's corporate feminism stands the example of socialist Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant. Kshama, the only socialist, working-class representative on a council with eight Democrats – two of them women – has used her election campaigns and council position to advance the interests of workers, and she unfailingly brings the voice of working-class women into the debates on wages, benefits, housing, and education. In just two years, her unapologetic working-class feminism won a \$15 minimum wage and millions more for social services, including year-round funding for a women's shelter.

From Condoleezza Rice to Hillary Clinton, the ascendancy of women to leadership roles has not, in and of itself, lessened the sexism, discrimination, unequal pay, and violence women continue to face in U.S. society. The election of Hillary Clinton may break the final glass ceiling in politics, but her corporate-approved agenda will not assist the feminist movement. It will only reinforce the corporate agenda.

What working-class women and families need are unapologetic fighters for a pro-worker agenda. In this presidential election, a victory for Bernie Sanders, who calls for a \$15 minimum wage, universal health care, strengthening union rights, paid paternity leave, and equal pay for women would significantly advance the interests of working-class women and their families. ☘

Whole Woman's Health v. Cole

Supreme Court Case: Huge Threat to Reproductive Rights

Ginger Jentzen

In November, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to review the most consequential case on abortion rights since the 1992 ruling in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. The case, *Whole Woman's Health v. Cole*, addresses Texas law HB2, which has led to the closure of more than half the state's abortion clinics since 2013. This is a clear attack on reproductive justice that could effectively cut off access to abortion for millions of working-class women and women of color.

But decades of retreat have shown that the strategy of the mainstream organizations – namely, electing Democrats – has been ineffective, especially in states dominated by GOP politicians, and that independent mass movements need to be built to challenge the far right.

The Supreme Court ruling in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* opened the door for states to pass insidious laws to restrict abortion access. When laws passed under *Casey* have been challenged, the Fifth Circuit Court has struggled to interpret consistently whether individual provisions cause an “undue burden” to women's health. As a recent article in *The Atlantic* states, “undue burden” is distinctly and bizarrely vague,” effectively providing legal cover for hundreds of right-wing restrictions on access to abortion (11/15/2015).

As a result, and most clearly across the South, working-class women often face insurmountable barriers to healthy abortions. The American Medical Association has broadly called these restrictions medically unnecessary. These restrictions range from mandating extremely long wait periods to prevent women from “making a decision she will regret” to requiring that doctors have admitting privileges to local hospitals to, in the case of HB2's second provision now under discussion, forcing providers to take on cost-prohibitive construction to make clinics “ambulatory surgical compliant” – that is, to widen doorways.

Before law HB2 began to take effect, Texas had 41 clinics providing safe abortions. Today, there are 18. If the justices take a broad interpretation of the law, this could mean immediately closing 20 clinics across seven states, including reducing the number in Texas to 9 or 10 – to meet the needs of 5.4 million women of reproductive age.

“I don't think it's overstating the case to say if the court upholds the restrictions based on the justifications each state is offering – that these are health protective – that it would result in the most drastic reduction of the availability of abortion at any point since *Roe v. Wade*,” Priscilla Smith, director of Yale



Activists in Texas demonstrate for abortion access.

Law School's reproductive justice program, said last week (*The Guardian*, 11/13/15).

Build a Mass Movement

The Supreme Court is scheduled to announce its decision in June 2016, as the presidential campaign kicks into high gear. The Republican establishment will use attacks on women as a drum-beat in the elections to galvanize the religious right. The right-wing populism seen in Ben Carson and Donald Trump's sexist and racist remarks carries with it the very dangerous possibility of emboldening extreme right-wing elements like Robert Dear, the mass shooter who terrorized the Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood clinic.

Republicans are clearly the main enemy in the battle for reproductive rights, but the Democrats will not build the mass movement necessary to defeat attacks on women. For example, *Roe v. Wade* passed in 1973 during a period of enormous social unrest when the U.S. ruling elite was being challenged on many fronts. Campus activism was at its height, and the country was rocked by massive actions for women's rights, anti-war protests to pull out of Vietnam, and the black liberation movement. Regardless of their rhetorical support for women's rights, the Democratic Party establishment's legalistic

“Whole Woman's Health v. Cole would result in the most drastic reduction of the availability of abortion at any point since *Roe v. Wade*.”

and defensive approach is no substitute for a fighting, working-class-centered women's movement. Historically, mass struggle has been the only vehicle to achieve victories for gender and racial justice.

Instead of allowing the right wing to continuously frame the debate, cynically using women's bodies as a get-out-the-vote tool, progressive forces must go on the offensive. The labor movement, representing millions of women, has a critical role to play in the struggle and faces its own SCOTUS challenge in the case of *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*. The *Friedrichs* ruling could make “right to work” national, which would be a huge blow to organized labor and the millions of women workers who've fought for and achieved better wages, health care, and workplace rights in the public sector through organizing.

If the labor movement took mass action in protest of *Cole* and *Friedrichs*, throwing their full weight against the right wing and their sexist, racist, anti-worker attacks, they could pave the way to a stronger workers' movement standing for genuine race and gender equality. To win, we must link the fight for women's rights with the fight for a \$15 minimum wage and union representation, forge ties with Black Lives Matter, and mobilize the millions needed in struggle to defeat the right wing.

Furthermore, building an independent political alternative to the two parties, one that fights capitalism's oppression of women with a single-payer health care system and safe access to abortion, is the only way to ensure reproductive rights for all. ✪

Political Polarization Deepens

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environment, will also be up for a vote in Congress in the coming months. This threat in particular should be met with massive mobilizations by trade unionists, environmental organizations, and young people.

On top of that, the biggest legal challenge to women's reproductive rights since *Roe v. Wade* will be heard by the Supreme Court before June.

All of these issues could bring tens or even hundreds of thousands onto the streets. Hillary will seek to take advantage of the situation while acting alongside the labor leaders to keep things “from getting out of hand.” And, of course, in the wake of the major party conventions, there will most likely be a huge “lesser

evil” mood to stop the Republicans that will lead large numbers of labor and progressive activists to focus on the elections. Historically, presidential elections have repeatedly cut across movements and struggles.

But we are definitely not at that point yet. And at the moment, despite the shift in the popular mood because of the threat of further terrorist attacks, the left in the U.S. has huge opportunities to push back and develop a challenge to the establishment on many fronts. Socialist Alternative will be a part of all these fights, aiming to help win victories for our class and all the oppressed and to win the best fighters to a full-fledged socialist program. ✪

Steelworkers Struggle

Lockout at ATI Enters Fourth Month



United Steelworkers are locked out in Pennsylvania.

Kristopher Cummings, Pittsburgh

While the Pittsburgh-based Allegheny Technologies Incorporated (ATI) may use the advertising slogan of “Investing in the future,” it is clear that this does not include investing in their workers. As of December, the lockout at ATI’s twelve specialty metal manufacturing facilities in six states has continued for over four months, having started on August 15 – affecting 2,200 members of the United Steelworkers (USW) union. However, this prolonged labor dispute has not broken the resolve of the workers who are on the picket lines.

Prior to the lockout, ATI offered the USW a “last, best, and final offer” that required major concessions on the part of the union and its workers. In this offer, the corporation demanded a regular twelve-hour workday, the ability to contract out work, changes to health insurance, and a two-tiered benefit system – which, for many, would eliminate pensions – to name a few of the concessions. Since that offer was presented, ATI has refused to negotiate with the USW to reach an acceptable deal – and, in response, the USW filed 18 unfair labor practices charges with the National Labor Relations

Board (NLRB), ranging from “coercive actions” to “refusal to bargain.” The USW and its members have maintained that they are only seeking a “fair deal,” and working to retain the terms of the contract that expired June 30.

Due at least in part to the lockout and decreased production, ATI has reported taking \$145 million in losses in the third quarter of 2015. However, the corporation has reported that their facilities, currently utilizing replacement workers – scabs – from the strikebreaking firm Strom Engineering, have returned to pre-lockout production levels at most facilities and full production at some. Workers on the picket lines stated that, prior to the lockout, they worked to produce a stockpile of materials and finished products that have been used as the corporation worked to train the scabs.

Most recently, ATI announced their next act of aggression against the locked-out workers. In early November, the corporation informed the union that it would terminate health care insurance to locked-out workers effective November 30. While these workers will be covered in most cases, either under an emergency plan offered by the USW or through a spouse, the termination of their plans is a clear

attempt by the corporation to break the will of the union workers. As the lockout heads into winter, workers also face another obstacle in the coming months from the loss of unemployment benefits. Locked-out workers are eligible for 26 weeks of unemployment benefits; however, that six-month period will expire in February of 2016. Workers on the picket lines reported that they were informed that the contract between ATI and Strom Engineering has been renewed into early next year, showing the corporation’s willingness to wait as long as they feel it takes to break the workers. However, it has not shaken the steadfastness of the locked-out workers, who have said from the beginning that they do not intend to give in to the concessions demanded by ATI.

While the USW members have stood fast and refused to capitulate to the company’s outrageous demands, this will most likely not be enough to win. In order to defeat ATI, the union will have to stop production in the plants. Stopping production means stopping profits. This requires mass pickets, including workers from other unions, preventing the scabs from going in. It also means being prepared to defy court injunctions.

Shutting down production

Kohler Workers Strike Back



Striking workers block a truck in Kohler, Wisconsin.

As we go to press, a settlement of the Kohler strike has been announced which was rapidly ratified by UAW members by a large majority. It appears that the deal includes significant wage gains but does not eliminate the tier system. However, it is certainly more than the workers would have achieved without a solid, well-organized strike.

Nicole Gabrielle Miller

Kohler, Wisconsin, is a quintessential company town. The entire village was built around the Kohler plant, which manufactures kitchen and bath products such as faucets and iron casting. In November, workers at United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 833 voted overwhelmingly, at 94%, in support of striking against the company’s proposal of higher insurance costs and continuation of the two-tier wage system. CEO Dave Kohler threatened, “If the two-tier wage structure disappears, so do the local manufacturing jobs.” But union leadership stated they are “not falling for that again.”

During the 2010 recession, the Kohler manufacturing plant laid off 600 workers and threatened to lay off more if the union didn’t accept a five-year contract which froze wages, increased health insurance costs, and established a tier system that pays newer employees nearly 50-60% of what their longer-tenured coworkers make. The Kohler family is ranked 65th in Forbes 400 list; from 2012-2013, their wealth doubled. Recently, the company has been back on the upswing, and the workers took note of the growth, hoping

for a fair contract last November, but they were disappointed to find that the company would simply continue the same nasty contract with a few crumbs thrown in to sweeten the deal.

The Kohler strike is an open-ended, large-scale, production-stopping strike in an era where strikes have increasingly been limited to one-day events. The strike began with mass picketing and disruption of traffic that lasted several days. And the picket line as a whole has held strong for over a month. In a union with 2,100 members, only 23 workers have crossed the picket line. Work stoppage strikes like this one have become rare in the recent past, with only 11 in the last decade.

There is overwhelming support for the strike, both in the community and in the broader labor movement. When the tier system was first established in 2010, the workers were isolated, but the mood has shifted dramatically since then. Unions across the country have demonstrated solidarity and collected donations for the strike fund. Community members participated in the mass picket.

In the recent period, Wisconsin has been a laboratory for right-wing union-busting experiments, with the crushing of the public sector unions in 2011 and the passage of “right to work” legislation in 2015. In the face of these attacks, many have wondered how the labor movement can survive. The Kohler strike harkens back to the sort of struggles that built the labor movement in the first place. This points to the significance of the strike, not only for the Kohler workers themselves, but for the entire labor movement. ✪

is how workers won industrial disputes in the past. Even this is not a guarantee of victory, but without it victory is almost impossible. Tragically, during the last several decades of retreat, the U.S. labor movement has largely lost these militant traditions, but the Kohler strike in Wisconsin which has shut

production, shows that they can be rebuilt.

At the same time as this lockout, there is another battle looming, as 13,000 members of the USW at U.S. Steel and 17,000 at Arcelor-Mittal also face the threat of being locked out. The USW has noted that in negotiations with the two corporations

that they are asking for similar concessions to ATI. While there are “continue to work” agreements in place during negotiations, the union feels that these corporations are waiting to see the result of the labor dispute at ATI before they make their next action. ✪

Bernie Campaign

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Even if big business and the Democratic Party establishment were unable to block Sanders in their rigged primary, there is no way they would simply accept having a nominee representing working people's interests at the head of one of the two corporate parties. Enormous pressure would be placed on Sanders to water down his platform and demobilize the movement behind him.

If they failed to force Sanders to make major political concessions, the Democratic Party establishment and big business would go all-out to sabotage Sanders in the general election campaign, preferring to see a Republican win than to allow the grassroots movement behind Bernie to consolidate into a new mass political force.

While setting out to turn Bernie's support into a serious movement will by no means ensure electoral victory, the potential clearly exists for the Sanders campaign to help ignite the kind of wider social upheaval in U.S. society that would be needed to win his program.

Sanders should use his massive reach on social media to encourage mass demonstrations by students for free education – building on the October day of action on 150 campuses dubbed the #MillionStudentMarch – and by workers and environmental organizations against the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He should become more directly involved in the Black Lives Matter protests against police violence, like those in Minneapolis and Chicago, where the movement is demanding the resignation of Mayor 1% Rahm Emmanuel, a close Clinton ally. Right now, Sanders should be joining our call for



Bernie Sanders speaking at Georgetown University.

demonstrations of all those targeted by Trump and the right populists wherever he speaks.

As the battle with Clinton and the Democratic Party machinery heats up, Socialist Alternative is moving more energetically to build the movement behind Bernie. Our goal is the same as the big majority of Sanders supporters: to create the strongest possible challenge to the billionaire class and overcome their stranglehold over American society.

Socialist Alternative will organize with Bernie supporters to build rallies, forums, and debates to expand the movement from below and expose Clinton's longstanding support for Wall Street and big business. We have repeatedly voiced our opposition to Sanders' declared plan to endorse Clinton if he loses the primary. Her agenda is diametrically opposed to the aspirations of the millions inspired by Bernie's platform. Endorsing Hillary would be a surefire way to demoralize, demobilize, and wreck the movement building up behind him. We would instead urge Sanders to continue running as an independent all the way to November, for example on the Green Party ticket.

Win or lose, the most important legacy of this historic campaign will be whether it builds an ongoing political movement against the billionaire class. ✪

Rahm Must Go

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We Need a Political Alternative

Laquan's murder – and the year-long cover-up – merely confirms what Chicagoans already knew: Our city's political establishment is rotten and corrupt to the core. CBS's *60 Minutes* has called Chicago the "false confession capital" of the USA. As long as power in our city remains in the hands of the business-backed Democratic Party establishment, there will be no meaningful change. Rahm and Chicago's elites promise only more of the status quo: more racist police harassment, brutality, and killings, more lives destroyed by mass incarceration, poverty, unemployment, housing insecurity, and cuts to education and social services. While Chicago might be an extreme example, dozens of cities across the country that are dominated by the Democratic Party are similarly suffering.

Labor-Community Mass Action Needed

Simply exposing Rahm will not be enough. We are urging all progressive forces, all labor leaders, all who want justice for Laquan McDonald, to mobilize their members for the demonstrations that are already occurring daily against Rahm's deeply corrupt regime. If these forces throw in their full weight, tens of thousands of people could be mobilized to demand Rahm's resignation. The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), which has fought Rahm's corporate education agenda for years has just voted overwhelmingly for strike action. The CTU could unite workers with Black Lives Matter to build a movement that confronts the very foundations of Chicago's rotten political machine.

We can build a political alternative. Socialist Alternative's Kshama Sawant was recently re-elected to Seattle's City Council despite the all-out efforts by big business to defeat us. Sawant and SA built an energized mass base of support by taking an uncompromising approach to workers' rights and racial equality. The political momentum created around Sawant's election led to a victorious fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, among other victories.

Our movement can win victories like this in Chicago, too, but this will require a level of coordination and political clarity that we have not yet seen, despite the daily demonstrations calling on Rahm and State's Attorney Alvarez to resign. For these direct actions to maximize their effectiveness, they need



Rahm Emanuel being heckled by the Dyett High community.

to put forward more detailed demands. For example, if Rahm resigns, who will take his place? The movement must build structures that allow activists to democratically discuss and determine its demands, tactics, and strategy. This should include electing an accountable leadership that will fight for the needs of working people and oppressed groups in Chicago, with no links to corporate politics.

The key issue right now is to build the type of mass mobilizations that can force Rahm out. As it exposes the ugly reality behind the corporate Democrats' claims to represent the interests of working people, black people, and the poor, this fight is not just about Chicago. We need to turn the crisis in Chicago into a decisive challenge to the corporate Democrats as a whole. Hillary Clinton has already shamelessly attempted to co-opt the Black Lives Matter movement by claiming to support it, despite her record of touting mass incarceration and welfare cuts. Rahm is a superdelegate supporting Hillary's campaign, and she has assured her continuing support for him. We say that Bernie Sanders, who has put forward a solid program for racial justice and whose campaign directly challenges these establishment forces and speaks to the interests of working people, should come to Chicago and join the demonstrators in the streets.

We need to force Rahm out. But let's not stop there. Almost anyone would be better than Rahm, but we don't need another Democratic Party politician promising us 1,000 new cops. Let's make this powerful movement against police racism a line in the sand in Chicago and build a new, fully independent political force in this city to remove the corrupt, corporate-backed Democratic Party establishment from power. ✪

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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Issue #19 - December 2015/January 2016

BLM MOVEMENT SHAKES ESTABLISHMENT

December 15: Recent weeks have shown that the black freedom movement centered around Black Lives Matter which emerged on the streets of Ferguson is not going away anytime soon. In Minneapolis, protesters occupied a precinct station for 18 days after the killing of Jamar Clark. When white supremacists staged an armed attack on the encampment on November 24, the protesters held their ground and thousands more came onto the streets. At the University of Missouri (Mizzou), after a series of racist incidents went unaddressed by the school's administration, black students rose up and were joined by wide sections of the student body and solidarity protests on campuses across the country.

As we go to press, the people of Baltimore are reacting to the hung jury in the trial of the first of five officers charged in the death of Freddie Gray, which led to massive upheaval earlier this year. Cleveland waits to see if the cop who shot 12-year-old Tamir Rice will finally be charged with murder.

To be clear, there is no evidence of an overall increase in police killings across the country. What there is now is a movement that will no longer accept the status quo and the structural racism ingrained in American society.

But it is the situation in Chicago that most clearly shows the explosive contradictions which the BLM movement has brought to the surface and that has the potential to rock the establishment to its core:



Chicago: Political Crisis and Police Murder Cover-Up

Rahm Emanuel Must Go

**Nick Wozniak and
Steve Edwards**

Seventeen-year-old Laquan McDonald was shot 16 times by officer Jason Van Dyke in October 2014. For 400 days, the video of his brutal murder was suppressed. In the past, the authorities might have succeeded in quashing the evidence of police murder. But this is not the past. It is now becoming clear that Laquan McDonald's murder might bring down one of the most powerful corporate-backed politicians in the country: Rahm Emanuel. Even mainstream corporate newspapers like *The New York Times* are openly speculating that Rahm covered up Laquan's brutal murder for 400 days to ensure he won re-election earlier this year.

This follows last year's uncovering of a secretly operated Chicago Police detention center at Homan Square, where over 7,000 mostly young, black, low-level drug suspects were coerced into confessions without legal representation. As the scandal deepens and reaches further and further into City Hall, a *USA Today* Poll found 51% of Chicagoans think Rahm should resign immediately.

This would represent a huge blow to the Democratic Party elites and billionaires who handpicked Rahm Emanuel to inherit the job of mayor. After all, he previously served as Obama's Chief of Staff and was a close advisor to the Clinton family. While Hillary Clinton has thus far remained all but silent on the scandal, albeit calling for a federal

investigation into the Chicago Police Department, a campaign spokesman said Hillary "is sure [Emanuel] wants to do all he can to restore trust in the Chicago Police Department" (*Politico.com*, 12/3/2015).

On the other hand, Bernie Sanders – whose campaign is a direct challenge to the party's corporate establishment – has correctly said that "any elected official with knowledge that the tape [of the police shooting of Laquan McDonald] was being suppressed or improperly withheld should resign" (*Politico.com*, 12/4/2015).

For Community Control of the Police

Under intense political pressure, Rahm has fired his superintendent

of police, his top detective, and the head of the police review board. He has also accepted calls for a federal investigation into the Chicago Police Department, after previously refusing to do so. He has also attempted a public apology.

Federal investigations have a history of being so ineffective as to be virtually meaningless: For example, the Cleveland Police Department had already been under federal investigation for 20 months prior to Tamir Rice being murdered. Across the country, failure to root out racist police and end the entrenched racial bias in law enforcement shows the urgent need for a fully independent, elected community control board with full powers over the Chicago Police Department, including hiring, firing, and setting budget priorities.

This needs to be linked to a wider program to address the vast inequality in dozens of U.S. cities like Chicago. We need an immediate end to the racist War on Drugs, starting with ending "Broken Windows" policing – which amounts to the mass criminalization of working-class people of color – and the immediate decriminalization and legalization of marijuana use, with full funding for drug addiction programs. In addition, nonviolent drug offenders should immediately be released, with clean records and with a fully funded jobs and housing program to assist reintegration into the community. We also need to recall all military-grade weapons from police departments.

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