

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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SUGGESTED DONATION: \$2

BUILD THE RESISTANCE AGAINST TRUMP!

NEW PARTY NEEDED TO FIGHT THE RIGHT

PROTEST THE
INAUGURATION
JANUARY 20-21

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower student-teacher 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 towards fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ For rent control combined with massive public investment in affordable housing.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Break the power of Wall Street! For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ 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. Massive public investment in renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low fare, high-speed, and accessible transit.
- ✦ Democratic public ownership of the big energy companies, retooling them for socially necessary green production. A "Just Transition" for all workers in polluting industries with guaranteed re-training and new living-wage jobs.

Equal Rights for All

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

- ✦ Defend immigrant rights! Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ 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. At least 12 weeks of paid family leave for all. For universal, high quality, affordable and publicly run child care.
- ✦ Fight discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community, and all forms of homophobia and transphobia.

Money for Jobs and Education, Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, 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 environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and other 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 failed system. No to 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. ✦

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WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

Sheila Czech Fayetteville, AR

The first time I truly experienced the extreme disparity between rich and poor was during childhood trips to my mother's country, the Philippines. The Philippines was – and still is – two separate countries. The version for the wealthy and powerful is a consumer playground of beach resorts, mega malls, and mansions; on the other hand, the Philippines of the poor and disaffected is a country where hard, honest work fails to keep families financially secure.

When I came back home from my family vacations, this perception of a stark contrast stuck with me. At first, I assumed that such a division could not happen here. After all, I live in the United States, an economically developed democracy and the richest country in the world. But the disparity existed here, too. When I came of age in the late 1980s, *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* was juxtaposed against the recession. I understood that my generation would be the first to be worse off financially than its parents.

I could not believe how many politicians proudly endorsed the deregulation of financial institutions, leaving their constituents without any protection. I felt disenfranchised – although I could see through capitalism's empty promises, I was not equipped to do much of anything about it by myself at the time.

Recessions exposed the old American

compact of financial reward and security to anyone who worked hard and earned a college degree as an empty promise. To many corporate employers, an applicant with a Master's degree was now a red flag, and academia was no longer able to employ those seeking teaching jobs.

Low national unemployment percentages belie the true situation today: millions of Americans are severely underemployed. The "free" market has been utterly unable to efficiently put to use the talents and education of millions of Americans.

Prosperity under capitalism is neither lasting nor universal. This system rewards neither learning nor hard work, and the destructive effects of consumer capitalism are everywhere, not just in the U.S. and the Philippines. No one should have to struggle to get their needs met. Everyone deserves to have dignity and equality, and everyone should be empowered to exercise agency. Socialism is the only system offering real solutions to the world we live in today. The true question is not "Why am I a socialist?" It is, "Why aren't more people socialists?" ✦



People's Budget Town Hall in Seattle: Build 1,000 Affordable Homes!

Manuel Carrillo

On October 18, over 200 social justice activists, homeless advocates, labor leaders, and everyday working people crammed into the Seattle City Council chambers for the third annual People's Budget Town Hall, organized by Socialist Alternative Councilmember Kshama Sawant.

The People's Budget is the annual counterweight to the business-as-usual city budget put forward by the Democratic Party establishment that overwhelmingly benefits big business, landlords, and developers. In years past, the People's Budget won more funding for the homeless

crisis and a women's shelter.

This year's central demand was that the \$160 million dollars originally earmarked for the most expensive police station in North America be used to build 1,000 units of affordable housing instead.

Sawant and others made clear that this would not have been possible without the work of the coalition that helped block the police station.

Socialist Alternative members played an active role connecting the fight for 1,000 homes to the fight against capitalism and for socialism. Socialist Alternative member Kailyn Nicholson said, "Our struggle to end the division of humankind into haves and have nots, bosses and workers, the powerful and the powerless, is the fight for socialism, and we start right here with a budget for the people."

When the event drew to a close, the mood was hopeful and upbeat. One final chant echoed throughout the council chambers: "Housing is a human right! Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Read more about the fight for a People's Budget at SocialistAlternative.org. ✦

"In a city like Seattle, in a country like the U.S., the crisis of increasing homelessness and rising housing unaffordability is not a crisis of economic growth or of resources or of wealth. The crisis of increasing homelessness and rising housing unaffordability is an ongoing crisis of political leadership."

~ Socialist Alternative City Councilmember Kshama Sawant

Socialist Alternative Statement

We Need Mass Resistance to Trump and a New Party of the 99%

Tom Crean and Philip Locker

People in the U.S. and around the world awoke today to one of the most shocking political upsets in living memory with the election of Donald Trump as president. It was the culmination of an election cycle when ordinary Americans rose up against the political establishment and against the destructive effects of globalization and neoliberalism. This was expressed both on the left, with the campaign of Bernie Sanders which galvanized millions for a “political revolution against the billionaire class,” and, in a distorted way, on the right with Trump’s campaign.

But Trump did not just run as the alleged defender of the “forgotten men and women” in working class communities. He also ran the most overtly bigoted and chauvinist campaign of a major party candidate in modern times. He created a space for white nationalists and open white supremacists to come out of their holes and try to reach disaffected white workers and youth. This is a very dangerous development.

However, we completely reject the notion – relentlessly pushed by liberal commentators, trying to deflect from the staggering failure of the Democratic Party – that the outcome demonstrates that the bulk of the white working class shares Trump’s racism and xenophobia. Clinton actually won the popular vote by a narrow margin. Trump only got 47.5% overall, with tens of millions of the poorest and most downtrodden Americans not voting.

Trump’s vote was first and foremost a vote against Clinton and the establishment; it was a vote for a “change agent” against a consummate representative of the corporate status quo. Many responded to his attacks on the “rigged system” and corporations who move jobs overseas. What was tragically missing was a clear choice on the left that could offer an alternative to the seduction of right populism.

Socialist Alternative stands with the millions of women who are disgusted by the election of an open misogynist and correctly see it as a step backward; with Latinos who fear that mass deportations of undocumented workers are about to ramp up to unprecedented levels; with Muslims and African Americans who fear that Trump’s hate speech will incite more violence and the growth of a far right force.

We immediately called protests in cities around the country to make it clear that working people and the oppressed must stand together and prepare to resist the attacks of the right. In the past 24 hours we have been inundated with requests for more information about our organization. We must start today



Seattle #ResistTrump protest the day after the election.

to build a genuine political alternative for the 99% against both corporate dominated parties and the right so that in 2020 we will not go through this disaster again.

A Shock to the Ruling Class

It needs to be underlined that the outcome of this election was not just a shock to tens of millions of progressive workers, women, immigrants, people of color, and LGBTQ people but also – for quite different reasons – to the ruling elite of the United States.

The majority of the ruling class see Trump as temperamentally “unfit to govern.” It is certainly true that Trump’s bully boy approach of publicly humiliating opponents and reacting to every perceived slight with nasty twitter posts has more in common with “strongmen” dictators in “failed states.” Even George Bush was not as proudly ignorant of international affairs as Trump. The ruling class see a Trump presidency as potentially deeply damaging to the interests of U.S. imperialism at a time when its global power is waning, particularly in the Middle East and Asia, challenged by Russia and especially by an increasingly assertive Chinese imperialism.

They strongly object to Trump’s vociferous rejection of free trade deals and the dominant capitalist economic doctrines of the past forty years. But the truth is that globalization is stalled. Its engine of trade has gone into partial reverse. The Trump vote has some parallels with the Brexit vote in Britain to leave the European Union earlier this year which also reflected a massive rejection of globalization and neo-liberalism by the

British working class.

The ruling class also fear that Trump’s crude racism, xenophobia, and misogyny will provoke social upheaval in the U.S. In this they will certainly be proved right.

At a deeper level, perhaps the most shocking aspect of this outcome for the ruling elite – including the corporate executives and the political establishment and corporate media outlets who serve them – is that the way they have dominated politics in this country through the two party system is broken. In election cycle after election cycle, the primaries have been used to weed out candidates who are not acceptable to corporate interests. Then the electorate would be left with the choice of two “vetted” nominees. The corporate elite might strongly prefer one or the other but they could live with either. Ordinary people were then left with the choice of picking a “lesser evil” or voting for a third party candidate with no chance of winning.

All that changed in 2016. First Bernie Sanders raised \$220 million dollars without taking a dime from corporate America and came very close to defeating Hillary in the rigged Democratic primary. Trump was also largely

shunned by the Republican “donor class” and the last two Republican presidents and the most recent Republican nominee were very public in rejecting him.

The Chickens Have Come Home to Roost

It is still staggering that the outcome of the primaries left people with a choice between the two most unpopular major party candidates of the modern era. Exit polling showed 61% of voters had an unfavorable view of Trump and 54% said the same about Clinton.

In the primaries, the Democratic National Committee did everything it could to stack the deck for the establishment’s chosen candidate, Hillary Clinton, against Sanders whom polls showed consistently doing much better against Trump. This speaks directly to the fact that a significant element of Trump’s eventual electorate was open to a genuine working class argument opposing the power of Wall Street and their free trade agenda while calling for a \$15 minimum wage, free college, single payer healthcare and massive investment in green infrastructure. But the truth is that the Democratic leadership would rather lose than to be tied to a program that really spoke to the interests of working people and the poor.

Disgracefully most union leaders threw their support and millions of dollars behind Clinton in the primaries while an important section of trade unionists and several national unions backed Sanders. In this way, the labor leadership helped to prop up Wall Street’s candidate against a pro-working class challenge.

Clinton limped into the general election as a deeply damaged corporate candidate. What received the most attention in the media was the State Department email scandal. But the

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New Publication from Socialist Alternative

The Failure of Lesser Evilism

Why Fighting the Right Means Building a New Party of the 99%

Get your copy from your closest Socialist Alternative branch – see p. 11

How can we build a movement to cut across the rise of right-wing populists? Is it possible to build a new mass party of the 99%, completely independent of corporate corruption? This pamphlet makes the case for building a left political alternative to the Democratic Party, and answers the arguments of those who backed Clinton as the “lesser evil” to Trump.



Mass Protests Break Out to #ResistTrump

Kailyn Nicholson
and Calvin Priest

Donald Trump's shocking victory was met with a mixture of anger, confusion, and very real fear among ordinary people in the U.S. and around the world. Millions asked, how could Trump win? And further, what will his presidency mean for immigrants, women, Muslims, and all others targeted by his viciously right-wing campaign?

But the election of one of the most right-wing presidents in U.S. history was also met immediately by determined mass protests. All across the country, tens of thousands of people poured into the streets to defiantly stand up against Trump's bigoted agenda. Many were protesting for the first time, and were angry but also empowered by the examples of the Black Lives Matter movement, Standing Rock, and Bernie Sanders' call for a "political revolution" in the presidential primary. The mood to fight back was also fueled by the growing

radicalization and huge discrediting of the political establishment over the course of the election, especially among young people.

Within hours of Trump's election, Socialist Alternative, Socialist Students, and Movement for the 99% organized protests in cities around the country. The call was met by 5,000 people in Oakland, 6,000 in Boston, 3,000 in Philadelphia, 6,000 in Seattle, and nearly 10,000 in New York City. The diversity of the chants taken up by the protesters reflected the important beginnings of solidarity between movements. Chants expressing the outrage of protesters like "Not my president!" and "F*** Trump!" were also joined by "Black Lives Matter!" "My body, my choice/Her body, her choice," "Mni wikoni!/Water is life!" and "Say it loud, say it clear - refugees are welcome here!" Combined, they pointed to a larger message of mass, united resistance that will be necessary to defeat Trump's attacks.

In New York, protesters held picket signs in front of Trump Tower declaring "Fight Racism," "Solidarity Not Scapegoating," and "Build the Resistance Against Trump." Protesters marched from there with chants echoing off downtown buildings, and drivers honking their horns and leaning out windows to raise fists of support.

At Seattle's Westlake Park, the rally was addressed by a range of speakers representing different groups: immigrants, indigenous people, LGBTQ people, labor, Muslims, socialists, and students. A young Latino activist and member of Socialist Alternative, Manuel Carrillo, responded to Trump's infamous call for a wall along the Mexico border by saying the movement would build its own wall: "Ours will be a wall of resistance, built on solidarity, struggle, and a socialist alternative."

As this paper goes to print, protests in dozens of cities have

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Protest at the Trump Tower in Manhattan.

Protest the Inauguration January 20/21

Socialist Alternative is calling for mass protests against Trump and his anti-working-class agenda in all major cities across the country to coincide with the inauguration ceremony on January 20.

The mass protests in the days immediately following Trump's election are only a small indication of the type of resistance that would be possible if trade unions, civil rights organizations, as well as women's and LGBTQ organizations go all out to mobilize their members.

It is vital that Trump's inauguration be met by the most impressive show of force possible. This should be the starting point for the mass struggle necessary to defeat his plans to ramp up deportations, register all Muslims, give major new tax breaks to the super-rich, remove health care from millions, appoint an enemy of women to the Supreme Court, and rip up environmental regulations.

Young people will be at the forefront of this movement as they have been in recent days, which is why Socialist Students are also organizing student walkouts at high schools and college campuses on Inauguration Day.

Contact Socialist Alternative to help organize a protest or walkout in your city: info@socialistalternative.org.

Mobilize to Defend Standing Rock and the Environment

#NoDAPL

Tony Wilsdon

Millions around the country and the world support the courageous stand of North American tribes fighting to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). At the end of October, a police force backed by corporate paramilitary agents and armored vehicles moved against indigenous people and other activists at Standing Rock. Now is the time for escalating solidarity protests.

At a time when scientists say that even the Paris Climate Accord is woefully inadequate to keep the warming of the planet to under 2 degrees Celsius, this struggle highlights the need to escalate our fight to stop catastrophic climate change.

The encampment on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, where representatives of more than 200 tribes have come together, is a show of strength by the tribes and follows

the recent "Idle No More" indigenous movement in Canada, which won victories against pipelines and helped to inspire the successful North West Coast struggle to block six coal export terminals. The issue of preserving land and water is central to indigenous peoples who were brutally driven off their original tribal lands in the past.

Failure of Corporate Politicians

Republicans are funded to the hilt by oil money. But so are the Democrats, and it was the Obama administration which oversaw the largest increase in oil extraction in a generation and whose State Department, under Hillary Clinton, pushed fracking globally.

President Obama, despite making some positive statements about a possible federal review, has refused so far to condemn the violent attacks on protesters or use his powers as president to stop the pipeline. As

president, he can assert treaty rights. This could immediately stop all actions by companies and state officials in Dakota. Indeed, it can't be excluded that, under mounting pressure, Obama could be forced to reroute the pipeline, which would be a victory for the protesters.

Build a Powerful Movement

We need to organize escalating protests outside the big banks, almost all of whom are funding the pipeline. We need to protest state authorities who send police to do the bidding of pipeline companies and arrest protesters. We need to build powerful protests on college campuses. We need to link the pipeline protest to other urgent issues. Importantly, Black Lives Matter has come out in support of the struggle: "This is not a fight that is specific



only to Native peoples – this is a fight for all of us and we must stand with our family at Standing Rock," (*BlackLivesMatter.com*).

Labor should also be spearheading this struggle. Some more progressive unions like National Nurses United, Communication Workers of America, Amalgamated Transit Union, and Amalgamated Postal Workers Union have taken clear positions against global climate change and have come out strongly in support of the struggle against the pipeline.

However, the main national labor federation, the AFL-CIO, is scandalously supporting

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Students on the Move

Massive Student Strike in Spain

Devin Deon Lee and
Elan Axelbank

On October 26, over two million students across Spain walked out of their classes to protest cuts to education, tuition hikes, and the reintroduction of the standardized “revalidation exams.” Tens of thousands of parents, teachers, union workers, and others took to the streets alongside students in several of Spain’s major cities, including Madrid, as a show of solidarity. Organized by the national socialist-led student union, Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE), the biggest national student union in Spain, this historic one-day strike can serve as inspiration for students and workers here in the U.S.

The strike targeted the Organic Law for Improving Education Quality, or LOMCE in Spanish, which will increase tuition by up to 66% and cut resources for scholarships by 50 million euros. Both policies will clearly hurt poor and working-class students disproportionately. A key demand of the strike was to abolish “revalidation exams” – standardized tests that must be passed to move to the next grade. They also want to abolish similar elementary and middle school tests. These exams were



Spanish students on strike in October, 2016.

last used in Spain under the fascist dictator Francisco Franco, but the government is now trying to reintroduce them. Protesters argue that the education system is becoming too inaccessible to lower-income families, creating an inescapable, determined academic path and a push toward privatized education.

Passed in 2013, LOMCE is a continuation of austerity measures imposed by the Spanish government after the 2008 global market collapse. LOMCE shortens the time needed to obtain

certain degrees. The stated purpose is getting students into work faster, but it actually devalues the worth of a degree. This push toward a faster school-to-work path takes away individual stability, further advancing a capitalist education agenda that is plagued by the profit motive. Education is supposed to give confidence and social mobility – but, in reality, LOMCE will hinder students from finding work because of the lesser value of their degrees.

These developments seem all too



www.SocialistStudents.net

facebook.com/SocialistStudentsUSA

In the final weeks of the election, Socialist Students organized debates across the country with College Democrats on the question of who progressives should support. We also organized actions against Trump. We provided an outlet for students who were fed up with corporate politics and the two major candidates.

Socialist Students at the University of Cincinnati has been doing inspiring work fighting for the conviction of a UC police officer who shot an innocent, unarmed black man last summer.

We will continue to organize and participate in #NoDAPL Standing Rock solidarity protests and Black Lives Matter actions.

In the coming weeks, we will be taking up Shaun King’s call for an Injustice Boycott (see InjusticeBoycott.com) starting on December 5 (see below).

But most of all we will be building toward student walkouts at high schools and college campuses across the country on Inauguration Day, January 20. Young people have played and will continue to play a key role in building resistance to Trump – and Socialist Students will be there every step of the way. ☺

real to us in the U.S. because of the recent attacks by city and state governments on public education, cutting budgets by tens of millions of dollars in many places. In higher education, tuition costs for U.S. colleges are continuously on the rise, and student debt is a looming disaster.

Sindicato de Estudiantes has declared that unless the Spanish government meets their demands of scrapping the tuition hikes and revalidation exams, there will be another massive student strike on November 24. The Spanish students’ fight against the attacks on higher education is the fight of students and workers in the U.S. and worldwide. ☺

BLM: Boycott Injustice and the Next Stage in the Struggle

Jess Spear and Stephan Kimmerle

Racism permeates every pore of U.S. society. That is not new. What is new is the growing awareness and increasing determination to fight against racism, particularly among the millennial generation (18-35). Over the past two years, the Black Lives Matter movement, through ongoing protests, marches, and major rebellions in Ferguson and Baltimore, has shaken U.S. society.

This determination and growing mood to radically change the system and address racism is a strong basis to build on, as *NY Daily News* reporter and BLM activist Shaun King has recently argued. The time is ripe for the next step in the Movement for Black Lives. King proposes an economic boycott set to start on December 5, the anniversary of the start of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, led by Martin Luther King, Jr.

According to King, the boycott will include cities, states, corporations, and institutions that are complicit in racism and police brutality. There will be concrete demands, Shaun

King explained: “We will be providing each city, state, business and institution a clear path out of the boycott” (*NYDailyNews.com*, 9/30/2016).

Boycotts can help to raise awareness and harm the profits of those benefiting from discrimination. Socialist Alternative supports and promotes all tactics, including boycotts, that can build our movements and their power to fight for real gains and link these battles to getting organized.

Boycotts need to be made visible and linked to a plan to engage communities in a collective action to spread the boycott – talking to people, campaigning on the streets, getting organized – as well as enforcement of the boycott, which gives it the greatest chance of success. A democratic backbone of the movement – for example, regional meetings with elected delegates to discuss and decide the next steps – is needed to give the boycott life, flexibility, and enormous strength in united action.

As we’ve said previously: “A united working-class movement, using the method of

mass protests, nonviolent civil disobedience, targeted boycotts, walk-outs and strikes, based on a program that puts people’s needs first, will be most effective in fighting back against racial and class oppression.”

Capitalism Means Racism

Socialist Alternative is fighting for a socialist world, and an integral part of that struggle is the fight against racism and all forms of oppression, here and now. The racist violence perpetrated on the black community, in particular, requires an urgent and effective response. The biggest gains achieved in the past were won through mass struggle, where hundreds of thousands of people were active in building mass movements. Concrete demands to improve the lives of people of color are needed to build the movement.

However, every gain taken from the ruling class by us workers is not secure under this system. That is why we link the struggles against the militarization of the police, or for each and every new home and job, to the struggle to end the corporate domination of

society in general.

Build a New Party for the 99%

The recent victory blocking the construction of what would have been the most expensive police precinct in the country – \$160 million – by Seattle Black Lives Matter activists demonstrates the power our movements gain when combined with independent working-class representation.

Socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant was the only councilmember to come out against spending \$160 million on a police bunker. Confronted by a growing movement in the communities and backed up by an unambiguous fighter inside city hall, the mayor and the rest of the city council were forced to back down.

To fight racism, stop Trump, and stop the right-wing threat, we need to both build our movements and connect them to building a new party comprised of working people, young people, and people of color. We need a party of, for, and by the 99%. ☺

The Struggle that Sparked the Civil Rights Movement

60th Anniversary

Montgomery Bus Boycott

Ramy Khalil

This December marks the 60th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott victory that ignited the Civil Rights movement and led to the dismantling of the “Jim Crow” system of segregation. Montgomery’s black population mounted a massive determined struggle involving 50,000 people, overcoming a violent backlash and virulent opposition from the political establishment. Today, Black Lives Matter has opened a new era in the movement for black freedom. With Shaun King’s recent call for mass national boycotts to begin on this year’s anniversary of the Montgomery boycott, the lessons from that historic movement have never been more relevant.

The U.S. Civil War, one of the most progressive events in modern history, brought an end to the institution of slavery that had been preserved in the young nation’s constitution. Reconstruction opened up the possibility of a social order without white supremacy, but this was tragically betrayed by the Northern ruling class in the face of ferocious resistance by the Southern white elite. Racism was codified explicitly into the law, and two separate and unequal ways of life were maintained, one for whites and one for blacks. Southern facilities were racially divided: from restaurants to water fountains to taxi cabs. Slavery was gone, but the racist system of “Jim Crow” took its place, backed up by intimidation, violence, and murder.

Lynchings were used to brutally and publicly terrorize the black population, and rallies were sometimes held beforehand, often with Democratic Party speakers. The Democratic Party historically had been the party of the slave-owners. In the decades before the Montgomery boycott, the northern Democratic

Party began making superficial appeals to black voters, but the Southern “Dixiecrats” continued to represent white large business owners who had a direct material interest in maintaining the racial hierarchy.

Segregation enabled corporations to super-exploit black workers by justifying extremely low wages. In Montgomery, Alabama, for example, the median income for blacks was approximately half that of whites. The system also served as a means of reinforcing divisions within the Southern working class and preventing the development of a united working-class movement. White workers were also brutally exploited, and it worked in the interests of the bosses to preserve the place of poor whites a step above the bottom of the social “pecking order.”

There were heroic efforts to organize workers in the South but the Southern elite largely succeeded in keeping unions out, which resulted in much worse wages and working conditions for both white and black workers compared to the North. A key source of the strength of industrial unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW), part of the radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), was based on uniting black and white workers in action against the bosses.

Socialists played a key role in building the CIO unions and understood the necessity of uniting workers regardless of race, ethnicity or gender. Labor leaders knew that organizing the South was vital to the further development of a united and powerful national labor movement. However, the refusal of the CIO union leaders to challenge Jim Crow and McCarthyism during its “Operation Dixie” organizing drive in the 1940s tragically left the Southern working class deeply divided – a key setback for the whole labor movement.



The boycott included...

Rising Expectations

Things began to change during World War II when over 500,000 blacks fought – in racially segregated units – and many died or were injured fighting the Nazis to defend “democracy and liberty.” After enormous sacrifices for the U.S., many returned home determined to no longer accept oppression.

In the post-war period, the country experienced its biggest economic upswing in history. The invention of the television brought commercials for automobiles, washing machines, and refrigerators directly into people’s living rooms. Many whites were paid enough to enjoy the new way of life created by these products, but blacks were largely left behind.

At the same time, African Americans were inspired by the revolutions taking place throughout Asia and Africa which were evicting European colonial occupiers and establishing independent governments led by people of color. Against this background, the U.S. Supreme Court felt compelled to issue its *Brown v. Board* ruling in 1954, striking down laws mandating separate schools for white and black students. But with blacks’ expectations on the rise, this victory only spurred on demands for more far-reaching changes.

Random Accident?

Higher expectations and increased confidence contributed to Rosa Parks’ refusal

to relinquish her place on the bus to a white person in Montgomery on December 1, 1955. She boldly defied the local law requiring blacks to give up their seats so whites could sit, and she was arrested.

We are often told that Rosa Parks was a tired seamstress who just wanted to rest after a long day’s work – an individual who merely acted on her own. But Rosa Parks was in reality an experienced activist. For 13 years she had been the Secretary of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Only five months before she had attended a two-week training on non-violent civil disobedience at the Highlander Folk School founded by Communist Party activists.

Black leaders in Montgomery were largely oriented toward a courtroom-based strategy, but they had begun discussing a mass bus boycott several years before Parks’ civil disobedience, particularly after Reverend Jemison organized a successful bus boycott in Baton Rouge in 1953. Jo Ann Robinson, president of the Women’s Political Council (WPC), had written a letter to the mayor a year before warning that “there has been talk from 25 or more local organizations of planning a city-wide boycott of buses.” Robinson described their plans: “I got on the phone and called all the officers of the three chapters [of the WPC]. I told them that Rosa Parks had been arrested and she would be tried. They said, ‘You have the plans, put them into operation.’”

The WPC immediately mobilized their



Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged as an important leader during the boycott.

Movement

Y: s Boycott



led mass demonstrations and marches, as seen here.

members to print and distribute 35,000 fliers calling for a one-day bus boycott. E.D. Nixon, a local NAACP officer and a union local president, convinced black ministers, including a new reverend in town, Martin Luther King, to promote the boycott in their Sunday sermons.

No one knew whether blacks would really boycott the buses the next day, and many were stunned to discover them essentially empty!

Organizers initially planned for the boycott to last only one day, but the struggle developed a dynamic of its own. The night after the boycott, a staggering 15,000 African Americans attended a mass meeting, and Martin Luther King inspired them to commit to extending the boycott until their demands were met. Participants rapidly formed committees and began organizing various aspects of the campaign.

Before the boycott began, approximately 17,500 blacks had been riding the bus every day. Most were low paid workers who could not afford their own cars or taxis, so the community had to develop creative alternatives. They rode bikes, carpooled, or even walked for multiple hours, rain or shine. Activists developed a sophisticated carpool system involving thousands of volunteers and overcame enormous logistical and financial challenges.

Reaction and Radicalization

The movement faced a ferocious backlash. A White Citizens Council was formed to encourage whites to ride the buses and oppose the boycott,

and its membership grew rapidly. White police officers ticketed hundreds of carpool drivers for minor traffic infractions, and arrested blacks on trumped up charges, including King himself, for driving five miles over the speed limit.

The reaction from racists and the political establishment resulted in strengthening the black community's determination to fight. King's wife Coretta described how the movement's demands grew bolder: "At first we didn't even ask for desegregation. We only asked for a more humane system of segregation on the buses. And when the opposition refused to grant that, then we realized they wouldn't grant anything anyway. So we might as well ask for, you know, complete desegregation. And that's what we went for, and we realized we had to go for broke, so to speak."

After a month, boycott organizers were receiving hate mail and 30-40 angry phone calls a day, many threatening violence. Both Martin Luther King's and E.D. Nixon's homes were bombed.

However, violence failed to intimidate the movement. So in February, city officials started enforcing a seldom-used Alabama statute against interfering with private business. They arrested 89 blacks for participating in the boycott. King was sentenced to spend 368 days in the penitentiary or pay a hefty fine. Insurance agents also denied coverage to black car owners known to be participating in carpools.

The main local newspaper, the *Montgomery Advertiser*, ran a front-page story falsely claiming the boycott had ended. However, the black community rapidly spread the word that it was a lie, and the boycott went on uninterrupted.

Many whites rallied against the boycott, including a number of bus drivers who joined the White Citizens Council. However, one black leader, Jo Ann Robinson, pointed out "there were many sympathetic whites, and they would do what they could to help to correct [the injustices]." Many letters to the editor of *The Montgomery Advertiser* revealed widespread sympathy, with whites objecting to the frequency of "instances of rudeness toward negroes" and arguing that "negroes had legitimate grievances."

Some whites openly supported the boycott even though they faced social ostracism and other forms of retribution. Robert Graetz, a white pastor who led the black congregation in the Trinity Lutheran Church, became a leader in the struggle and helped get *Time* magazine and others to cover the story. His home was eventually bombed.

Divisions in the Establishment

After half a year of mass struggle, a federal district court ruled that Alabama's bus segregation law was unconstitutional. However,

the ruling was appealed. But each legislative maneuver and racist attack only served to strengthen the resolve of African Americans who were overcoming their fears and becoming conscious of their collective power.

The boycott was cutting into the sales of white-owned businesses. As the second Christmas shopping season of the boycott approached, they initiated talks with boycott leaders in hopes of negotiating a compromise. Early on, the black community might have accepted a partial settlement, but at this point they had sacrificed too much and come too far.

Finally, after a year-long grueling battle, in November 1956 the Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision that banned segregation on Alabama's buses. It would take another month still before federal authorities forced local authorities to heed the decision.

On December 20, black leaders called a mass meeting to declare victory, and the boycott was ended. African Americans began boarding buses again, sitting proudly wherever they pleased.

Violence and harassment still continued, but the community's victory gave blacks throughout the U.S. an enormous boost of confidence. The incredibly inspiring victory in Montgomery paved the way for the largest revolt of African Americans in U.S. history which would put an end to Jim Crow.

Leadership and Mass Action

The boycott was truly a mass movement, with tens of thousands of working-class blacks attending regular mass meetings, sometimes nightly, throughout the year-long campaign. These meetings were the backbone of the movement; they enabled people to coordinate, exchange experiences, and muster the courage to keep fighting.

King emerged at these meetings as a leading figure. His speeches outlined the campaign's accomplishments and challenges, provided a vision for taking the movement forward, and placed their fight in the context of the broader struggle for equality and freedom. The campaign was won by the combination of the courageous sacrifices of tens of thousands of African Americans, King's inspiring leadership, and the role of activist organizations in building the mass direct action.

King's poetic words gave voice to the struggles of black people: "We have known humiliation, we have known abusive language, we have been plunged into the abyss of oppression, and we decided to raise up only with the weapon of protest." His strategy of mass, non-violent struggle contrasted with that of the more moderate NAACP leaders who had focused on a legal strategy confined to courtrooms, fearing that mass direct action would alienate



Rosa Parks' 1955 mugshot.

Democratic and Republican politicians. The Civil Rights movement made real gains when it stopped waiting for approval from liberal politicians and acted collectively to defy unjust laws, a key lesson for us today.

The growing support for Black Lives Matter shows the renewed potential to build a powerful mass movement against institutionalized racism and inequality. Shaun King's call for a mass boycott starting December 5th could help broaden that struggle. The Montgomery Bus Boycott shows we will win real change not as lone individuals or small groups, but by building organizations of oppressed and working-class people, and mass movements too powerful for the establishment to ignore.

It is worth noting that the Montgomery boycott strategically took aim first at one form of segregation, not the whole system of Jim Crow. But when activists organized a targeted boycott of the private bus companies and won, their victory had implications far beyond one city's buses. It became an historic turning point in the struggle against segregation. A similar targeted and successful boycott today could again help develop the confidence of oppressed people to fight for fundamental change.

Legalized segregation based on overt white supremacist ideology was defeated by the Civil Rights movement, but institutionalized racism continues. Schools are as segregated as they were in 1954 and the Great Recession of 2008-9 led to the biggest loss of wealth in the black population since the Civil War.

Ending entrenched structural racism will require the same kind of determined mass struggle we saw in Montgomery. While fighting for every reform possible within the framework of the current social order, we must also recognize that the only way to end institutionalized racism and discrimination is to end capitalism. Key to ending racism and capitalism will be the organized social power of the black working class, as part of a united, multi-racial and militant labor movement, like the CIO of the 1930s and '40s.

In fact the struggle for black freedom in the past and today has acted to push forward the class struggle generally. The Civil Rights struggle opened up a period of wider radicalization in the 1960s and 70s which could have led to challenging capitalism as a whole. BLM today is the sharp end of a wider radicalization especially among young people which is opening up a new era of struggle in American society. ☪

Resist Trump and Build a New Party

continued from p. 3

continuing Wikileaks revelations also confirmed in detail and underlined the picture that Sanders had painted in the primary: that Clinton was a servant of Wall Street who said one thing in private speeches to bankers who handed her millions and another in public.

Liberal apologists will seek to blame the white working class, Bernie supporters or even Jill Stein's voters for the outcome. But as we have repeatedly pointed out the Democratic Party long ago abandoned even the pretense of defending working class interests. For decades they implemented or supported one neo-liberal measure after another: from "ending welfare as we know it," expanding mass incarceration, pushing through NAFTA and repealing Glass Steagall under Bill Clinton to bailing out the banks while millions lost their homes under Obama.

After the 2008 and 2009 economic crash, the left gave Obama a pass. The Democrats controlled Congress and did little to help the working class in the worst crisis since the 1930s. This opened the door to the Tea Party to mobilize opposition to the bailout of Wall Street and anger at the politicians.

Under pressure from the 45% who supported Sanders in the primary, the Democrats adopted the most left platform at their convention in 40 years. But Clinton ran her campaign solidly focused on the message that Trump was an existential danger to the Republic and that "America was already great." Hillary's donors did not want her stressing issues like the minimum wage or ending college debt for fear of raising expectations among fired up working people. It could be argued that Hillary had no credibility as a progressive so what could she do? Well what she did was make Tim Kaine who supported TPP and bank deregulation her vice presidential candidate instead of someone like Elizabeth Warren. She refused to promise not to appoint a bunch of Goldman Sachs personnel to her administration. All of this was completely uninspiring to the millions of people hungry for real change.

It is therefore no surprise that Clinton was unable to enthrone greater voter turnout. Neither Trump nor Clinton got 50% of the vote. And while Clinton got a very slightly larger share of the popular vote than Trump, she got six million fewer votes than Obama in 2012



#ResistTrump protest in Los Angeles, November 9, 2016.

and fully ten million fewer than Obama in 2008. Meanwhile, Trump's vote was actually a million votes lower than Romney's!

As Jacobin pointed out: "Clinton won only 65 percent of Latino voters, compared to Obama's 71 percent four years ago. She performed this poorly against a candidate who ran on a program of building a wall along America's southern border, a candidate who kicked off his campaign by calling Mexicans rapists. Clinton won 34 percent of white women without college degrees. And she won just 54 percent of women overall, compared to Obama's 55 percent in 2012. Clinton, of course, was running against a candidate who has gloated on film about grabbing women 'by the pussy.'" Clinton also did not excite younger black voters, many of whom sat the election out. And she lost in white working class communities where Barack Obama won handily in both previous elections.

The Democratic establishment played a dangerous game in this election – and they lost. And it will be working people, communities of color, and women who bear the brunt of their failure.

Sanders Should Have Been on the Ballot

In the past few years we have seen a profound political polarization in the US with the growth of support among young people for socialism and Black Lives Matter while there is a growth of open xenophobia and racism among a minority of the population. But the overall trend in American society has been to the left, expressed in support for marriage equality, a higher minimum wage and taxing the rich. This election

does not change that underlying reality but it clearly puts the right in the driver seat with control of the presidency, both houses of Congress and the bulk of state legislatures.

A large section of the white working class and middle class did indeed use this election to underline their utter rejection of the Democratic Party and also the establishment of the Republicans. In a distorted way, tens of millions were looking for a way to oppose the corporate elite. We cannot close our eyes to the growth in support among a minority for far right ideas but it is revealing, for example, that exit polls showed that 70% said undocumented immigrants "should be offered legal status" against 25% who said they should be deported.

This is why it is absolutely tragic that Bernie Sanders was not on the ballot yesterday. We urged him to run as an independent as early as September 2014 when he first raised the idea of a presidential campaign. When he decided to run within the Democratic Party primary we disagreed with accepting this framework but continued to engage with his supporters in a discussion about how to achieve his program and the need for a new party.

Our warnings about the consequences of supporting Hillary have been tragically borne out. If Sanders had continued to run all the way to November, as we and many others urged, his presence would have radically changed the character of the race. He would have almost certainly forced his way into the presidential debates and we would right now be discussing the immediate question of forming a new party of the 99% based on the many millions of votes he would have received. This is a massive opportunity missed.

Socialist Alternative supported Jill Stein of the Green Party who received just over one million votes because she also put forward a platform that substantively spoke to the interests of working people. Stein's campaign had many limitations but, despite them, her vote

Undemocratic Outcome

Donald Trump won the Electoral College – the only vote that counts in American presidential elections based mostly on a winner-take-all state by state system. However, the popular vote was won by Hillary Clinton by at least 400,000. It is an absurd throwback that the U.S. is still using an election procedure which was based on the "Founding Fathers'" desire to maintain a check on popular sovereignty. In the original Constitution, Senators were elected by state legislatures for this same anti-democratic reason. It is long overdue: Abolish the Electoral College! ✪

in a small way indicates the massive potential that exists for the development of a mass left alternative.

A Presidency of Chaos and Struggle

The election of Donald Trump is a disaster which will have many negative consequences. But it is also a phase in the ongoing process of political and social upheaval in the U.S. Capitalism and its institutions are discredited as perhaps never before, a process that continued right through the end of the general election with the FBI interjecting itself into the political process and Trump relentless talking about the "rigged" political system.

There will inevitably be widespread despair in sections of the left and a feeling that all attempts to move society forward are useless. It is absolutely essential to push back against this mood. Real change as Bernie Sanders correctly pointed out comes from the bottom up, from mass movements in the workplaces and the streets.

Trump's victory represents the "whip of counter-revolution." There will be chaos and provocations which will impel millions into defensive action. This is why those who have been radicalized in the past period must redouble their efforts to build a real mass movement for change, independent of corporate control. The social movements of recent years and especially BLM show the potential.

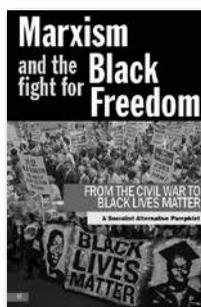
But it is also essential to see that Trump will inevitably disappoint his supporters. "Building a wall" will not create millions of good jobs to replace those lost to automation and trade deals. And though he talks about investing in 21st century infrastructure, he is also committed to even further massive tax breaks for billionaires like himself. A mass movement against Trump will need to appeal directly to the white working class and explain how we can create a future where all young people can have a decent future rather than trying to recreate the "American dream" by deepening racial division. Such a future can only be achieved with socialist policies. ✪

New Publication from Socialist Alternative

Marxism and the Fight for Black Freedom

Get your copy from your closest Socialist Alternative branch – see p. 11

This pamphlet by Socialist Alternative looks at the role of Marxist ideas and socialist organizations in the black freedom movement from a critical perspective. It outlines a materialist view of the origins and development of racist ideology and structural racism. Finally it explains the Marxist view of the tasks confronting the movement today.



A Tale of Two Cities

Atrocities in Aleppo and Mosul

End the U.S. Wars and Imperialist Interventions in the Middle East

Stephan Kimmerle, Seattle

Around 300,000 people live in rebel-controlled Syrian city of East Aleppo. Theirs is a life under siege, with limited access to food, medicine or fuel. In this city alone, more than 10,000 have died. "Those who can't find a place in a cemetery are buried in empty lots or public parks, which now have row after row of hastily buried bodies in shallow graves" (WSJ, 10/25/16).

The Syrian regime, backed by Russian air-power, have carried out "acts that beg for an appropriate

investigation of war crimes," said U.S. secretary of State John Kerry. While the siege on Aleppo is undoubtedly criminal and horrific, Kerry's tears are cynical and hypocritical. Just 400 miles from Aleppo, the U.S. is massively involved in creating a humanitarian catastrophe in the drive to seize the Iraqi city of Mosul from ISIS fighters, with massive air strikes and special troops on the ground. Meanwhile the U.S. allied Saudi regime has been bombing Yemeni cities for months now. The UN refugee agency warned that the Aleppo battle could "be one of the largest man-made displacement crises of recent times."

The timing of the U.S. backed forces advancing on Mosul is linked to Russia and Syria's intensified siege on Aleppo. The U.S. hopes a decisive blow against ISIS in Iraq, pushing them out of Mosul and other cities, will force ISIS to regroup in Syria, undermining the Syrian regime and the efforts of its Russian allies.

As they did a century ago, capitalist and imperialist rivals are competing to re-draw the map of the Middle East in their chase for oil profits and geo-strategic influence. This is in the context of the relative decline of U.S. power globally and regionally. They are driving the region deeper into nationalism, sectarianism and ethnic cleansings.

Destabilization Beyond the Middle East

In Syria, the civil war began as a revolutionary uprising, part of the Arab Spring in 2011. But the uprising rapidly degenerated as various reactionary forces within Syria, and outside regimes, emerged as the main combatants. Now, on one side the reactionary dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad is backed by Russian capitalism and the right wing Iranian Shiite clerics. On another side are reactionary largely Sunni groups dominated by right-wing political Islam, backed by U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Turkey. This includes forces that emerged directly out of al-Qaeda.

In Iraq, the 2003 U.S. invasion and



An Aleppo neighborhood destroyed by war.

occupation used brutal divide and rule tactics between Shiites, Sunni and Kurdish people, unleashing unending sectarian conflict and a disastrous failed state.

Years of sectarianism, of ethnic and religious civil wars, have not only destabilized the countries at war. The wave of refugees from Syria and Iraq, seeking help in neighboring countries or in Europe, is spreading political instability. The poison of sectarian despair has fueled the rise of radical right wing Islamic terrorism internationally.

Wars Between U.S. Proxy Troops

Turkish troops are also now active in Syria, attacking Kurdish fighters and preparing for a confrontation with Iraq about the future of Mosul, which they do not want to fall into the hands of Kurdish troops. Brutal oppression of Kurdish people, their language and their culture, has long been the reality in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Now, the Turkish elite views the Kurdish progress in northern Iraq and in the Kurdish areas of Syria as a threat to their own regional power ambitions and the integrity of the repressive Turkish state.

U.S. imperialism relies heavily on proxy troops to carry out its wars in the Middle East because the American public remains skeptical of war after the disasters in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, this policy has meant relying on national, religious, and ethnically based forces on the ground as in Iraq that are locked in conflict with one another even as the U.S. continues to arm them for its own purposes. This is a guarantee for continued instability, especially if they succeed in

militarily defeating ISIS.

"Several Thousand" More U.S. Troops?

"Too bad a plausible plan for the political aftermath [of the fall of Mosul] is nowhere in sight," writes the *Wall Street Journal* (Oct 25). However, their call is for "a long-term U.S. deployment in Iraq of several thousand troops, both for political leverage with Iraq and other regional players and as a regional rapid-reaction force." The *New York Times* agrees, fantasizing about a Middle East "desperate for American leadership" (Oct 25). In their eyes, former president George W. Bush was too hawkish, but "Mr. Obama's approach to the region has not worked" either.

What the *New York Times* apparently considers too "dove-ish" is an Obama administration simultaneously conducting a massive air war with special ops troops deployed in Iraq, continuing bombardment in Syria, active support for the brutal Saudi-led war on Yemen, covert military campaigns in Somalia and Libya, and the continuing war and drone strikes across Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The horrific situation facing the people of Aleppo and Mosul today must signal a call to action. There is an urgent need to revive the U.S. anti-war movement to stop a further escalation of the slaughter in these ongoing wars for oil and imperialist dominance in the Middle East. The key to ending these wars is action by working people in the Middle East to defend themselves from and to stop sectarian attacks and lay the basis for a movement against oppression and poverty. ✪



SocialistWorld.net

Ireland

Anti-Water Charges Protester Unjustly Convicted

Seraphina Cobeen

On October 22, a seventeen-year-old in Ireland was found guilty of "falsely imprisoning" an elected official during a peaceful demonstration against the introduction of water charges in Jobstown, a section of Dublin. Since then, the water charges have been suspended – a tremendous victory for the anti-water charges campaign – but the protesters are still being tried in an attempt to criminalize political activity and intimidate working people and youth from joining movements and protests.

The Irish ruling elite is determined to push back against the defeat of the water charges. This is the same elite which at every point sought to make working people and youth pay for the 2007/2008 financial crisis through vicious austerity. The movement against water charges gained mass participation - up to 57% of people refused to pay their water bills and hundreds of thousands protested in the streets against Irish Water! In June, the establishment was forced to suspend the water charges due to the strength of the non-payment movement.

This verdict has serious consequences. Nineteen more people are facing trial from the Jobstown protest, including Paul Murphy, an elected Socialist Party TD (Member of Parliament). The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) and the sister organization of Socialist Alternative in Ireland. It played a key role in the anti-water charges movement.

Defeating these outrageous is key to future movements of the working class and their ability to fight back. We will continue to protest these charges – to fight for the people of Jobstown who are falsely accused and for the working class that has borne the brunt of austerity in Ireland. ✪

Read more about the struggle in Ireland at SocialistWorld.net.

Fight for \$15 in Minneapolis Shows Need for Political Alternative



15 Now gathered over 100 people in Minneapolis at its October 15 meeting.

Socialist Alternative and 15 Now Minnesota have been fighting for a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Minneapolis for over two years. Over that time, \$15 an hour went from a far-out proposal from cities like Seattle to being supported by 68% of Minneapolis residents. Through grassroots organizing, strikes, and demonstrations, low-wage workers – not Democratic Party politicians – have decisively won the battle of public opinion. Even though the national Democratic Party theoretically supports \$15 an hour in their platform, Minneapolis Democratic Party politicians have been a principal obstacle to winning. It shows the deep ties the Democrats have with big business, even at a local level, and points to the need to build an independent political challenge to their rule.

With the exception of one Green Party City Council member, the Democratic Party dominates at all levels of government in Minneapolis. With no Republicans, they are the sole agents of big business and the developers in City Hall.

The Twin Cities are home to 17 Fortune 500 companies – the highest concentration in the country – yet also the worst racial inequities in the nation. A staggering 48% of black people in Minneapolis live in poverty. There have been no substantial reforms to the Minneapolis Police Department following the murder of Jamar Clark, which sparked nationwide protests in

November 2015. There is ambitious urban development taking place intended to attract young professionals back into the city and, at the same time, pricing working-class people out of their historic neighborhoods.

The Democratic leadership in Minneapolis has used every tool to try and block \$15. When Seattle passed \$15, the leading Democratic Party politicians in Minneapolis stayed quiet. After fast-food workers started going on strike demanding \$15 an hour, Democratic Party Mayor Betsy Hodges sharply opposed \$15, instead favoring a “regional strategy” with no plan to achieve it. We persisted, pulled together a broad labor and community coalition, and collected nearly 20,000 signatures to put the question of \$15 directly to voters through a ballot initiative. The Democrats in City Hall voted to block our initiative, claiming it was illegal.

We took them to court and won, and a judge ordered the city to put \$15 on the ballot. Then the Democrats in city hall turned to the Republican-dominated Minnesota Supreme Court to block \$15. They even welcomed the Chamber of Commerce as an ally on the appeal, allowing them to file their own separate legal argument to

block \$15 from voters. One Minnesota Supreme Court Justice was even Donald Trump’s potential choice to replace Antonin Scalia on the U.S. Supreme Court! In the end, the Democrats in City Hall succeeded and prevented \$15 from appearing on the November ballot, despite 68% of Minneapolis voters supporting the proposal. This shows how far the Democratic Party will go to defend the profits of big business.

Throughout this process, big business had consistent fighters for their interests in City Hall. A crucial ingredient to how \$15 was won in Seattle was socialist Kshama Sawant using her city council seat to build 15 Now throughout the city. Socialist Alternative sees elected positions as a platform to build movements, not just a space to argue with big business representatives. With that one seat in Seattle serving as an organizing hub for social movements, Kshama has dramatically shifted the political landscape. To win a \$15 minimum wage in Minneapolis, we have to follow on Seattle’s lead. We need an independent political alternative to the big-business Democrats who run our city. ☘

Minnesota Nurses Strike Settled After 38 Days

Katie Quarles, RN, United Hospital Negotiator, Member of MNA Board of Directors (personal capacity)

After thirty-eight days on strike, the 4,800 members of the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) in Minneapolis-Saint Paul voted on October 13 to accept a deal with Allina Health, the largest hospital chain in the Twin Cities. It was the largest indefinite strike by nurses in many years. Neither side was able to claim victory, and the strike set the stage for future contract struggles and workplace confrontations.

The union brought issues to the table aiming at increasing staffing levels and workplace safety. Allina Health management made a calculated attack on the nurses’ health insurance plan, cancelling coverage on October 1. Management estimated that most nurses would abandon the union and go back to work, especially when facing the looming loss of their health insurance.

The union organized a corporate campaign

which targeted Allina’s Board of Directors and CEO. MNA educated nurses and the public about Allina’s board, which is dominated by CEOs and upper management from companies like General Mills, Buffalo Wild Wings, and Piper Jaffray (an investment bank). The union organized Skyway marches of hundreds through both downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul, particularly protesting when Allina’s CEO – and big Clinton supporter – Penny Wheeler spoke publicly.

Negotiations resumed at the end of September, producing an offer at the beginning of October which was overwhelmingly rejected, and the strike continued.

The final agreement gave up the MNA health insurance plans in two years, putting MNA members on the same (lower value) health insurance plans as the rest of Allina’s employees. In return, the contract offered MNA nurses a series of one-time payments into flex spending and health reimbursement accounts. There remain major contested issues in staffing and workplace safety.

The agreement is still more than management intended to give.

The most important development from this strike was the lessons nurses learned through their determined collective action. Nurses found their voices. Many more nurses signed up to be union stewards. Nurses are going back confident to refuse unsafe assignments and take their contractually guaranteed breaks.

There are many lessons that need to be discussed among the MNA union activists and the broader labor movement for future struggles.

For example, unlimited strike action can be successful, but it has to be undertaken only in conjunction with a well-prepared broader strategy of escalation, including citywide rallies, appeals to other unions, and other campaigns.

A strategy also needs to be developed to take on the broader fight against labor laws that make many successful tactics illegal, such as calling for solidarity strikes or physically blocking strikebreakers, customers, or deliveries from entering. ☘

Labor News in Brief

Read more about these struggles at SocialistAlternative.org.

SEPTA Workers Strike in Philly

Bus drivers, subway conductors, and trolley drivers in Philadelphia organized in Transit Workers Union 234 announced a strike on November 1 as negotiations with SEPTA broke down. Workers demanded bathroom breaks, better pensions, and no cuts to health care.

Harvard Dining Hall Workers Wage Historic Strike

In the first strike at Harvard in thirty years, 750 Harvard University dining hall workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 26, won higher wages, guaranteed seasonal pay, and held the line on health care.

The 2016 U.S. Prison Strike

Hundreds of thousands of people are incarcerated throughout the United States and are paid sub-minimum wages to do work for corporations in the prison system. Prisoners organized a work strike starting September 9 to coincide with the anniversary of the Attica Uprising.

Chicago Teachers’ Contract Not a Solution to the School Crisis

After 22 months of bargaining, during which the union and supporters had mobilized thousands of members and supporters for dozens of street actions, including an April 1 one-day strike, a contract deal between the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) was reached at the last minute and subsequently approved by the union. Read our analysis at SocialistAlternative.org. ☘

#ResistTrump Protests Break Out

continued from p. 4

continued every night since.

Protests have been marked by frustration and disillusionment in Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party and their failure to defeat Trump. Many recognized that the calculated undermining of Bernie Sanders' campaign by the DNC - despite polls showing Bernie matching up far better against Trump than Clinton - was a major factor in Trump's improbable victory. Seattle City Councilmember and Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant address to the crowd at Seattle's Westlake Park:

"We can not even trust the Wall Street dominated Democratic Party to beat the most unpopular candidate the Republicans could ever find to run for president. Their politics prepared the ground. Look at NAFTA and the TPP. Look at cuts to social security and welfare. To build the resistance against Trump, to stop the growth of his movement, we need to build our own movements, we need our own mobilizations. Working people and youth need an independent party of, for and by the 99%. Are you with me?"

She was answered with a deafening cheer.

The question now is whether we can turn the initial protests and solidarity into sustained and powerful movements. Already the burgeoning resistance has crystallized around another date of protest: Trump's inauguration on January 20. Inauguration protest events have popped up on Facebook in nearly every major city, using hashtags like #ResistTrump and #OccupyInauguration.

We need to use the next two months build toward the biggest possible protests



on inauguration day as a springboard to ongoing mass mobilizations. Already, in Boston, Socialist Alternative members held a public meeting to discuss the way forward for the movement that attracted over 400 people. We need to systematically organize in our workplaces, our schools, and in our unions to build the largest possible actions. We will need to organize meet-ups to prepare those events, with banners, pickets, posters, and march routes.

Building the kind of resistance necessary to block Trump's attacks will require us to reject the calls of Democratic Party leaders and others to silence our movement. After calling Trump "profoundly

dangerous," Clinton is now telling her supporters, "We owe him an open mind and the chance to lead." Obama similarly said, "We are all rooting for his success in uniting and leading the country." But we cannot wish Trump any "success" in his Contract with the American Voter or the rest of his bigoted agenda. This would be a dangerous mistake. Unity is essential, but the unity needed is not with Trump, the Republican or Democratic Party establishments, or the billionaire class. We need unity of ordinary people to stand up against his call for mass deportations, registration of Muslims, and other vicious attacks on the working class and oppressed people. ✪

#NoDAPL

continued from p. 4

the pipeline project. Under pressure from the building trade unions, they are taking a narrow view of support for pipeline jobs over the broader issues of this struggle. We call on the AFL-CIO to reverse their position.

The role labor could be playing in these and similar struggles is based on their tremendous resources, which could be directed at building the struggle as well as educating workers. In addition, they have the most potent weapon of all in the battle between workers and corporations: the power to withdraw their labor, for example by refusing to deliver materials going into the site. We need to link the legitimate concern of workers about the need for good jobs with the need for urgent action on climate change. A clear call for a massive green jobs program, with retraining for those whose jobs are phased out, as a just transition from fossil fuels to green jobs is a critical part of building this struggle.

Call for Action

- ✪ #NoDAPL: end the North Dakota Access Pipeline; stop oil trains running through cities and towns; ban fracking. Organize escalating protests at Standing Rock and in cities across the country.
- ✪ Withdraw all National Guard troops, sheriffs, and police from the #NoDAPL protests. Full rights to Native Americans to decide over their lives, land, and future.
- ✪ End the age of fossil fuels. For a just transition for workers and communities disproportionately impacted by pollution and climate change. Good jobs and clean, affordable energy for working people, backed by a massive investment program in sustainable energy production.
- ✪ Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and many more are complicit in climate destruction. Put the giant energy companies and major banks under public control and management. For an emergency plan to tackle climate change. ✪

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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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Trump Targets Immigrants



Lessons of 2006 Movement

Erin Brightwell

Attacking immigrant workers with vile racist language and the promise to build a wall along the border were mainstays of Donald Trump's campaign. Now Trump is threatening to ramp up mass deportations in his first 100 days in office. His "Contract With the American Voter" states:

- ❖ Cancel all federal funding to sanctuary cities.
- ❖ Begin removing the more than two million criminal illegal immigrants from the country and cancel visas to foreign countries that won't take them back.
- ❖ Suspend immigration from terror-prone regions where vetting cannot safely occur. All vetting of people coming into our country will be considered "extreme vetting."

In addition, Trump has threatened to cancel the DACA program which Obama brought in to remove the threat of deportation from 750,000 who came to the U.S. as small children.

This is not the first time the right has gone on all-out assault on immigrants. In 2005, during George W. Bush's administration, "The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" (H.R. 4437) was passed by the Republican-dominated House of Representatives. This infamous legislation contained a host of vicious,

reactionary measures aimed at immigrants, including militarizing the border, criminalizing undocumented immigrants and anyone who helped them, and building a border wall. A true mass movement arose in opposition and succeeded in making it politically impossible for H.R. 4437 to become law. A look back at how this struggle developed is relevant to the movement that will need to be built in the coming months to fight Trump.

In the spring of 2006, a powerful mood of anger at H.R. 4437 galvanized millions into mass demonstrations in cities all over the country. Some of the biggest marches in April were counted in the hundreds of thousands, and two million marched on an April 10 nationwide day of action. Large immigrant organizations, the Catholic Church, and Spanish radio DJs were involved in organizing and leading the actions, but these organizations were surprised by the size of the response from working-class Latino communities.

As the movement developed, it became more radical and went beyond calling for repeal of H.R. 4437 to rejecting the second-class status being proposed by corporate politicians backing "immigration reform" and demanding immediate legal status for all workers. At this point, the movement had moved well beyond what was acceptable to the Democratic Party, the alleged defender of immigrants' rights.

When a call was made for a one-day

nationwide strike and boycott, dubbed the "Day Without Immigrants," the more conservative elements of the leadership of the movement, as well as Democratic politicians tried to put on the brakes.

Despite the campaign that was waged against the idea of a strike, May 1, 2006 was a historic day and an awe-inspiring success for the movement of immigrant workers. Millions joined marches in large cities and small towns across the country, including an estimated 400,000 in both Los Angeles and Chicago. Hundreds of thousands of workers went on strike and paralyzed important sections of the economy in many areas and the port of Los Angeles was shut down. In building and carrying out the first national political strike in many decades, the immigrant rights' movement revived May Day in the U.S. as the international day for workers.

The mass movement of 2006 not only stopped H.R. 4437 but also helped to push back anti-immigrant attitudes in society. It did not, however, succeed in winning "equal rights for all workers" which was one of its key demands. Crucially, the wider native-born working class did not take action in support of the movement despite the sympathy of many. This allowed the ruling class to isolate, wear down, and ultimately savagely repress the movement – particularly through targeted Gestapo-like mass deportations of Latino workers who were unionizing, as in the

meatpacking industry.

Today, after eight years of Obama promising reform but simultaneously raising deportations to previously unseen levels, immigrant communities are facing the possibility of a severe increase in repression with Trump's election. The president-elect's plan on immigration echoes much of H.R. 4437. Like the House Republicans of 2005, Trump seeks to attack immigrant workers to divert anger from the failure of capitalism to provide decent jobs for million of working-class people.

This time, Trump must be met by mass resistance in which the labor movement plays a decisive role alongside all of the other people targeted by his vile agenda. People of color, women, LGBT people, immigrants, and all working people and youth face extraordinary dangers from a Republican-controlled congress and a Trump presidency. Only the maximum unity and the willingness to use a range of tactics including mass civil disobedience and strike action will be able to stop Trump. There can be absolutely no reliance on the Democratic Party or any section of the corporate establishment. The Democrats, as in 2005, will be opposed to the only strategy that will work: mass mobilizations of working people. But, if our movements succeed in dealing a decisive defeat to Trump on this key part of his agenda, we can force him on the defensive and cripple the right-wing onslaught. ❖