

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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THIS SYSTEM IS KILLING US.

YOUTH RISE UP AGAINST VIOLENCE,
SEXISM AND RACISM

ALSO INSIDE

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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. ✦

WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

Ranson Thomas Nurse Gainesville, Florida



Working as a nurse, I have experienced the hardships my patients suffer who are forced to pay ridiculous amounts of money for their health care, as well as the immense pressure put on my co-workers and I to always do more with fewer resources and staff. All of this because our health system has to turn a profit for health insurers and health providers.

When I initially got out of college I volunteered for Democratic Party political candidates and initiatives hoping to change things for my patients and fellow nurses. It was only after Barack Obama was elected president in 2008 and he and the Democratic Party failed to achieve even a seemingly minor victory like a public option for health insurance, that I realized how ineffective and unwilling the party was to help people gain access to health care. I spent thousands of hours of my life registering voters, phone banking, tabling, and canvassing for a public option, only for the Democrats to give that demand away at the first chance. The party had prioritized the wants of the wealthy insurance companies over the needs of the sick and poor. It was then that I realized that if I truly wanted to

advocate for my patients, I couldn't remain a Democrat.

I had always supported things like universal health care, an end to wealth inequality, and free and open higher education. When I first learned what socialism was in high school I remember thinking it sounded like a pretty good idea to me. I had even called and considered myself a socialist for years. After leaving the Democratic Party I realized that if I really considered myself a socialist, then maybe I should be in a socialist party.

I read more about socialists in the U.S. and learned about what Socialist Alternative had achieved in Seattle through the struggle for a \$15 an hour minimum wage and Kshama Sawant's victory. I was inspired and excited to get involved with a political party that actually followed through with its promises and fought for working-class people, and even more excited when someone contacted me and helped me join. Despite calling myself one for years, I can now look back and say the day I became a socialist was the day I became a member of Socialist Alternative. ✦

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Don't wait! Make sure you stay up-to-date on the important analysis, tactics, and strategy to take the struggle against the billionaire class forward and build the socialist movement. Socialist Alternative helped elect the first socialist to Seattle City Council in 100 years and win the first citywide \$15 minimum wage in 2014.

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Mass Movement Urgently Needed

Dreamers Betrayed

Tom Crean

Last September, Trump and his Attorney General, the odious Jeff Sessions, declared that they were rescinding DACA, the highly popular program brought in by Obama that protects 800,000 Dreamer immigrant youth from deportation and allows them to work and attend college. He gave Congress a deadline of March 5. Trump then said that he wanted Congress to bring in legislation to protect the Dreamers, at one point calling for a “bill of love.” He made clear that legislation had to include funding for a wall with Mexico as well as a massive cut to legal immigration.



Demanding a clean Dream Act, Dreamers occupy the Senate rotunda, February 7.

Shutdown Fiasco

In January, the Senate Democrats shut down the government demanding that a deal be done to secure the position of Dreamers in exchange for agreeing on a budget with the Republicans. They also made clear though that they were willing to agree to fully funding the wall. Even then, Trump refused to make a deal. After three days, the majority of the Democratic Senators caved. In the weeks following, they clarified that they were “decoupling” the budget from DACA, effectively abandoning their leverage. In mid-February, a budget bill was passed that includes massive increases in military spending but also significant increases in domestic spending.

In exchange for “decoupling,” the Senate Democrats were promised a debate on immigration. Four bills were proposed but none of them got the necessary 60 votes. The position in the House is even more deadlocked. Socialist Alternative predicted that a deal with Republicans would be very hard to achieve. The hard right see any path to citizenship for Dreamers as “amnesty” and even Trump’s reactionary proposals as a betrayal. There is still an outside chance of some form of “kicking the can down the road” compromise where DACA is left standing in its current form for a period but it looks increasingly likely that DACA will simply expire. Meanwhile ICE raids

have been stepped up - including workplace raids and targeting of prominent immigrant activists.

Dreamers Betrayed

Socialist Alternative has repeatedly called for mass action to defend dreamers, pointing out that a “clean Dream Act” without a lot of reactionary baggage attached would require an escalating series of major mobilizations by immigrants and their allies in the native-born population with unionized workers playing a leading role. This is the only way to bring the necessary pressure to bear to see this through.

Despite posturing - and an eight-hour speech in the House of Representatives by Nancy Pelosi eulogizing the Dreamers - the truth is that Dreamers and the whole immigrant population were abandoned and betrayed by the leadership of the Democratic Party who, in the end, refused to use the leverage they had in Congress to defend against vicious Republican attacks. They also refused to mobilize people in the streets. The Democrats are opposed to social struggle unless they’re talking about past social struggles - ones that are long over and safe to eulogize. This past summer they refused to engage in any serious mobilization to defeat Trumpcare which was ultimately only narrowly defeated due to its massive unpopularity and Republican divisions.

Increasingly, the focus of millions who want to strike a blow against Trump is being directed to the November midterm elections and the prospect of the Democratic Party taking control of the House, possibly (but much less likely) taking control of the Senate, and making significant gains at the state level. We strongly sympathize with the desire to see the Republicans driven from office, but the problem is that in the absence of a mass movement that fights the Republicans’ attacks in the meantime, the right wing and Trump have begun scoring victories. The biggest was the highly regressive tax bill passed in December. This is combined with a wave of attacks on women’s rights, LGBTQ rights, and the right to protest. This is not to mention Trump’s environmental and financial deregulation. And now there is the likelihood of a massive defeat for immigrant youth and their families.

Public sector unions are also firmly in the crosshairs of the right with the Janus case in front of the Supreme Court and a decision expected by June. If upheld, Janus will significantly weaken labor in the sector where it is best organized. It is understandable why watching the daily soap opera in the White House, many would conclude that Trump and the Republicans are completely incapable of getting things done, but this would be a

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Nine-Cent Wage Rise Sparks Stock Market “Correction”

Alan Jones

The stock market correction - which included the largest one day fall in history in early February was triggered by the news of a slight increase in wages for workers. The increase in wages was a mere nine cents per hour for non-supervisory workers, but it was enough to be seen as a threat to the massive profits of big business. This fundamentally reveals a diseased, profit-addicted economic system that only does well when the vast majority are suffering and goes into convulsions when workers make any gains.

While Wall Street was making record profits, some astonishing statistics reveal what is really happening among large sections of workers: As of 2013, 45 percent of working-age households had no retirement savings. A 2015 Federal Reserve study revealed that half of those surveyed said they could not gather \$400 to cope with an emergency, while household debt has surpassed the high levels reached before the 2008 crisis.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is busy shoveling more money in the pockets of the rich with the passage of tax reform - a massive transfer of wealth - costing over \$1.5 trillion, while at the same time eliminating any regulations on industry and the financial system.

The Coming Recession

The sharp market correction came on the heels of a number of apparently positive economic reports. The U.S. economy is projected to grow by 2.7% in 2018 and for a period, the tax cuts and deficit spending by Congress will act to stimulate the economy further. The recent

correction does not therefore inevitably mean there will be a recession in the immediate future as there are various factors which could keep the recovery going for a certain period of time.

But at a deeper level, there are serious problems which are acknowledged by many of the representatives of capitalism. At the recent summit of the elite at Davos in January, the World Economic Forum warned about the state of the world economy:

“However, this relatively upbeat picture masks numerous concerns. This has been the weakest post recession recovery on record. Productivity growth remains puzzlingly weak...And in many countries the social and political fabric has been badly frayed by many years of stagnating real incomes.”

On the basis of the continuation of capitalism in a period of “secular stagnation” further downturns are inevitable leading to more austerity and reductions in living standards. Upheavals, downturns, and financial shocks are inherent in a system dominated by an irrational and destructive drive for profits.

The Socialist Alternative

There is no final crisis of capitalism. It will continue its trajectory toward the abyss of poverty, wars, racism, and environmental destruction. The only way to reverse course is for the working class to take hold of the levers of power and bring the giant financial cartels that run the world economy under democratic public ownership and control as a first step towards a democratic, socialist system.

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Seattle School Bus Drivers Strike and Win!

Nick Jones

On the same day that hundreds of teachers, members of the Seattle Educators Association (SEA), walked out in solidarity with striking Seattle school bus drivers, the drivers' employer, First Student, capitulated and reached out to Teamsters Local 174 to restart negotiations. Three days later, a new contract was ready to be voted on.

On February 10, after a 9-day-long strike, Teamsters Local 174 members ratified the new contract with First Student, the nation's largest school bus company, by a 97% margin. The vote had bus drivers crying for joy in the union hall. The contract they won includes not only a more affordable health care plan, but retirement benefits – a first among First Student contracts nationally.

"We consider it a victory because they were adamant about giving us nothing. This new contract represents the best deal any bargaining group in North America has received from First Student," explained striker Todd Larson.

School Board Complicity

The strike throughout its course indicted



Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant joins school bus drivers on the picket line.

more than just First Student.

Larry Nyland, superintendent of the School Board has said in the past that health care for the Bus Drivers would be "cost prohibitive," demonstrating that this strike was not only a victory against the multinational First Student, but against the austerity measures

of the Seattle Public School Board.

First Student's contract with the School Board stipulates a fine for every route not run. There is no indication that the school board is collecting on those fines. The unwillingness of the School Board thus far to levy fines has fired up the SEA who see this

pugnaciousness by the Board as millions of dollars lost for a school district starved of resources.

Workers Solidarity and Fightback

Throughout the strike, Socialist Alternative members visited the picket line nearly every day. Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant walked the picket lines, wrote letters, and raised awareness of the strike. The key component, however, was the overwhelming support the drivers had from the community. Parents wrote letters to the superintendent saying their kids would not cross the picket line.

Public school programs continue to be squeezed by the relentless drive toward privatization, and this means public school resources being front and center on the budget chopping block. The only way to ensure the public education we rely on isn't scraped hollow, is by forging powerful bonds between all workers in schools, parents, and the broader community. The bus drivers' victory shows us, that together and only together, can we win a better world. ✪

Nightmare Working Conditions, Amazon's Dystopia Spreads

Seraphina Cobeen

Last June, Amazon bought Whole Foods for \$13.7 billion in their latest attempt to expand their corporate reach. Whole Foods workers were immediately worried – already underpaid, they'd heard the stories of the brutal working conditions for the company's warehouse workers and feared the same conditions would spread to their stores. Amazon warehouse workers face a pace of work so extreme that some end up in the emergency room. They face high processing targets, which if not met often result in firing.

This fear turned out to be well-placed as Amazon has implemented a new scorecard system at Whole Foods stores that resembles the conditions at the warehouses. This new system penalizes workers for the slightest infractions including items on shelves being an inch out of place. Scores less than 90% are considered a failing score and can result in workers getting fired.

Workers are under constant stress with these new extreme conditions. Stores are scored twice a week and include on the spot quizzes. One worker said that "I wake up in the middle of the night from nightmares about maps and inventory, and when regional

leadership is going to come in and see one thing wrong, and fail the team. The stress has created such a tense working environment. Seeing someone cry at work is becoming normal" (*Business Insider*, 2/1/2018).

Now they're even trying to incorporate Whole Foods into their delivery model, testing out guaranteed two hour grocery deliveries from their stores in a few cities. Amazon delivery drivers also face tight deadlines with little time for bathroom breaks, often speeding in order to make targets, and we can expect similar conditions for Whole Food delivery drivers. This is yet another attempt by Amazon to squeeze money out of their workers by making things more efficient without an increase in wages or conditions.

Amazon's Dystopia

Amazon recently also made news when they secured two patents for wristbands that they could use on their warehouse workers to track their every move. Such wristbands include tracking devices that monitor exactly where your hands are in relation to inventory bins, and can track everything from how long your bathroom breaks are, to how much work is lost when you pause to scratch your nose.

These wristbands can also emit vibrations for any mistakes like nose scratching or misplacing items.

While workers face huge consequences for minor mistakes, the CEO of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, makes billions of dollars. He's now the richest man on Earth, worth over \$100 billion. That wealth comes from extracting more and more value out of warehouse workers and other employees while paying them a fraction of the wealth their work creates.

Under increasing threats, the need for workers to organize and fight back has become more clear. The workers, if mobilized, have the power to shut down warehouses and grocery stores. By threatening Amazon's profits could win huge gains in wages in working conditions. Most of these workers don't make a living wage, and the stress of attempting to make ends meet while facing worsening working conditions could be the spark to begin an organizing campaign that could eventually spread across Amazon's empire as well as the entire logistics industry which now employs over four million people.

Amazon Fears Workers

Whole Foods and Amazon are scared

of the power that their employees would have if they organized and unionized. This shows how much could be won if workers were successful in such attempts. However, attempts to organize Amazon will face a brutal response from Amazon management to defend their profits as has happened in the past. The machinists who attempted to unionize in a fulfillment center in 2014 were faced with enormous pressure from the company's hired anti-union law firm and the organizing attempt was defeated. This shows the need for a return to the militant strategy and tactics that built the labor movement in the first place.

Workers need to fight back against these increasingly dystopian conditions by building the most powerful possible campaign, organizing and connecting with workers in other stores and unions.

If they are democratically organized around clear demands like a living wage, better working conditions and the right to unionize, they could strike a blow to Amazon and the bosses generally, and point the way forward for workers across the country to fight back in their own workplaces. ✪

Parkland School Massacre: Youth Rise Up Against Violence & NRA

Steve Edwards

On February 14, seventeen young people were gunned down and many more injured at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida in yet another in a seemingly endless succession of mass shootings at schools.

In the past week, the survivors have stood up to the arms industry and the politicians they control and called time on their enabling of mass killings. Five years and 239 school shootings after the massacre of Sandy Hook – years during which the politicians hired by the gun lobby have repeatedly used “thoughts and prayers” to silence any serious discussion about addressing the madness of a society awash with guns – the dam has been broken by a group of energized and furiously angry high school students.

Protests Spread Nationally

Inspired by the Florida students, demonstrations have taken place throughout the country, including at the headquarters of the National Rifle Association.

Further protests are planned – on March 14 the national Women’s March organization has called for a coordinated national walkout of students and teachers in schools across the nation. Plans are also being laid for a national day of action on April 20 which is the anniversary of the Columbine school shooting as well as for a march in Washington DC on March 24.

Unions that represent teachers and other school employees should support these calls, mobilize their members to take action alongside students, including strike action where possible. The mobilizations should escalate around concrete demands including banning military-style semi-automatic weapons and other basic gun safety measures, full funding for all school services to help students in crisis situations, and demilitarization of our communities.

Gun Violence

School shootings are the most horrific aspect of the epidemic levels of gun violence in the United States which is far higher than in any other wealthy society. There are many reasons for the scale of violence but all point back to the savage history of American capitalism and the brutal alienation and inequality it engenders today. The past 40 years of neo-liberal policies have seen relentless attacks on the historic gains of working people, women and black people. These attacks have been carried out under both Republican and



Students nationwide have walked out in anger over inaction on gun violence.

Democratic administrations. With the profound weakening of the labor movement and the massive increase in inequality, there has been a loss of the traditions of collective action and solidarity which are vital to pushing back the dark forces tearing at our social fabric.

While acknowledging that there are many legitimate reasons why people want to own a weapon in this society, including personal protection, we in Socialist Alternative have also directly posed the question of whether the present situation is in any way in the interests of working people. The history of mass shootings is enough to show that the prevalence of guns in U.S. society is not a positive thing for the vast majority of people.

But we also reject the idea that only the state can be trusted with weapons. The history of police and military interventions is one of attacks on unions and civil rights organizations, of spying, provocations and as we have seen in too many instances, the ability of the police to shoot unarmed suspects, particularly people of color, without consequence.

But the enormous number of military-style weapons that are available in the U.S. present a clear and present danger to working class people and youth. A majority of young and working class people agree that we need reasonable limits on the type of firearms available, and also restrictions on the ability of people with a history of violence and threats of violence to have access to them.

Socialists support some limitations on access to guns, and the types of guns that are available, as a public health measure. However gun control measures will clearly not solve the problems of poverty, inequality and alienation

that underlay gun violence and measures to sharply curtail the guns already in circulation would require a massive police intervention of a kind which few would support.

The Role of the NRA

The NRA is a multi-million dollar corporate lobby for an industry which, like other polluting and dangerous industries such as tobacco, asbestos, oil, coal, gas, and agro-chemicals, seeks to block legislation and prevent research into measures that might protect humans and their environment from their products in order to protect their profits. But it is more than that. The NRA which claims to have over four million members is driven by a right-wing libertarian ideology that promotes a particularly reactionary version of individualism and uses “gun rights” to provide cover for the right wing of corporate America to pursue its anti-working class agenda.

One of the NRA’s standard responses to mass shootings is to say that the answer to “bad guys” with guns is to arm the “good guys” to the teeth. In a society where the idea of collective solidarity has been so severely undermined and where individuals feel helpless this unfortunately has an effect. In Florida, there is now serious discussion about arming teachers in the classroom. We reject this approach which will only tend to worsen the climate of fear and violence.

A Broader Program

The students are correctly pointing to Trump and the NRA and saying, “if you can’t

fix this you should get out of the way.” The corrupting influence of corporate money applies not just to the Republicans but to the Democrats as well. The Democrats will use these events to argue that the key issue is to vote for them in November. But we need to insist that the only way to decisively defeat Trump and the right is to build a mass movement based on a program that speaks to the needs of ordinary people. The revolt of youth against violence and political corruption can be the spark to reignite the movement.

Young people and their parents have the right to demand that they be able to go to school every day safe from the horror that visited Parkland. Young dreamers have the right to be safe from deportation; young women have the right to be safe from sexual assault; young black people have the right to be safe from police brutality. Through collective, mass struggle we can bring down the Trump regime and win real reforms. But we will need to go further and root out the capitalist system that keeps breeding horror upon horror.

We Say:

- ✦ Build, spread and escalate the movement including mass walkouts, protests, occupations and strike action.
- ✦ For the restoration of the ban on semi-automatic military-style weapons and large capacity magazines and other modifications that enhance performance.
- ✦ A background check and waiting period for all gun sales, closing the gun show loophole. However background check denials need to be for good cause (for example a history of domestic violence) and subject to democratic accountability and appeal.
- ✦ The demilitarization of the police and public schools. Schools should have democratically elected committees to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all employees, students and parents.
- ✦ Get the NRA and ROTC out of our schools; Nikolas Cruz was trained to shoot in a program funded with a \$10,000 grant from the NRA.
- ✦ Full funding for social service programs in schools including trained counselors and school psychologists.
- ✦ A massive jobs program, a \$15 an hour federal minimum wage and other anti-poverty measures, and a single-payer, socialized health-care system which prioritizes mental health care would be huge steps forward in creating a saner, less violent society. ✦

Read the full version of this article at SocialistAlternative.org



LESSON MASS WOMEN OF THE 60S

Erin Brightwell & Rob Darakjian

A new women's movement is emerging in response to the election of the misogynist Donald Trump, starting with the 2017 women's marches and now with the #MeToo campaign. The potential power of the #MeToo moment has so frightened the political class, the CEOs, the 1% investors, etc., that dozens of famous abusers have been fired or forced to resign. This is a victory, but women have much more to win.

A real pathway for workers to deal with abusive bosses and coworkers, whether your boss is famous or not, can be won, but it will require a mass movement that takes the streets and disrupts the status quo. The last major women's movement in the US during the 1960s and 1970s was a period of sustained mobilization around women's issues that won important reforms and changed the attitudes of millions on women's roles in society. It also showed the limitations of liberal and radical feminism.

The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s emerged during an era of massive social upheavals nationally and internationally. In the US, the determined struggle of African Americans in the Civil Rights movement had a transformative effect on the consciousness of millions of workers and youth. The movement against the war in Vietnam was enormous in scale, drawing an estimated 36 million to protests during 1969 alone. The establishment was being challenged from all sides, and women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and workers were emboldened to take their fight against oppression and inequality to higher levels of organization and action.

The Birth of NOW

The National Organization of Women, NOW, founded in 1966, developed a strategy and tactics to deliver full legal equality of women to men. Although NOW often campaigned for demands that would benefit all women, NOW policies were centered around the concerns of educated, middle class women and were sometimes at odds with working class women's interests.

NOW was effective in winning reforms through a barrage of lawsuits combined with protests and mass actions, particularly in employment discrimination. It began by pushing for an end to sex-segregated job listings in newspapers, combining lobbying efforts with picketing and demonstrations which succeeded in ending the practice by 1968. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency tasked with enforcing the Civil Rights Act rules against discrimination in employment, only began enforcing the law on sex discrimination after a NOW campaign forced the change.

On August 26, 1970, the National Women's Strike saw tens of thousands of women strike all across the country around three central demands; the right to abortion, the right to childcare, and equal opportunity in employment and education. Demonstrations varied in character from city to city, but it was because of the existence of NOW that the Women's Strike was a nationally coordinated action.

In New York City, fifty thousand women marched down 5th Avenue, and a banner was hung from the Statue of Liberty, emblazoned with, "Women of the World Unite!". The one day strike was a huge success, and NOW's membership increased by 50% in the following months. At its peak in 1974, NOW could claim 40,000 members, a reflection of the fact that the Women's Movement had truly acquired a mass character.

While NOW embraced a relatively radical program, it did not seek to challenge the capitalist system, but to win women an equitable place in it. In the interest of appearing acceptable to the "mainstream" of society, NOW's leadership consciously pushed away radicals. It was clearly linked to a wing of the corporate Democratic Party.

Despite some campaigning on racial inequality, NOW had serious inadequacies in its approach to women of color, and the organization was overwhelmingly white.

NOW leader Betty Friedan infamously referred to radicalizing lesbian women as "the lavender menace"; lesbianism didn't fit in with Friedan's respectability politics. NOW's

refusal to fully take up racial and sexual diversity in organizing, and its focus on legal equality rather than a program addressing working women's needs constituted a significant weakness for the entire women's movement.

Women's Liberation

For many of the young women who were involved in the anti-war and civil rights movements, the liberal feminism epitomized by NOW was not enough. The enormous radicalization of this period spurred women to explore a complete undoing of women's roles in romantic relationships, in the family, in society, and in organizations of the left. The birth of women's liberation groups can be traced to activist women's experiences being sidelined politically and sexually objectified within certain "new left" organizations.

This was particularly true of the Students for a Democratic Society which failed to address widespread chauvinism in its ranks. This led a number of women in SDS to a more intense discussion about the deeper roots of women's oppression and how to fight it. These types of debates were occurring among left wing activist women across the country, including in Black and Latino organizations. In the fall of 1967, a section of radical women began to form their own organizations, dedicated to the liberation of women. By 1969, there were women's liberation groups in over 40 cities.

Women's liberation organizations often started as consciousness-raising groups, where women gathered to discuss their common oppression and developed into activist groups that used direct action to campaign on reproductive rights, rape and the objectification of women. Activists overturned the taboo on talking about women's sexuality and reproductive health, and lesbian women were welcomed into the movement.

Although the women's liberation movement embraced a more global view of women's experiences than the mainstream feminist movement, it too was dominated by middle class white women. Socialist-feminists within the movement never coalesced into a unified force

that impacted the overall direction of women's liberation. Separatist ideas of women organizing and even living separate from men was a trend within the women's liberation movement, giving the media ammunition to smear it as "man-hating." The movement's failure to adopt a clear program that could speak to the interests and needs of working class women and women of color limited its appeal, even while its campaigns had a positive impact on popular opinion.

Winning the Right to Choose

NOW led the mainstream feminist push for abortion rights, becoming the first national organization to demand the abolition of all laws restricting abortion, and contributing to the establishment of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL), which led the mainstream campaign for abortion rights.

NARAL worked with the rapidly growing women's liberation movement to stage provocative events, such as speak-outs where women testified about their own abortion experiences. Debates against anti-abortion activists was another favored tactic of NARAL, and the organization produced materials giving advice on how to stage and win debates, and how to get maximum media coverage.

The Chicago Women's Liberation Union, a socialist-feminist group whose many projects included the abortion-providing Jane Collective, staged a direct action at the American Medical Association's convention, where activists infiltrated the event and presented a list of demands that included free, legal abortion. The women's movement in New York won abortion rights after a sustained struggle including direct actions in 1970. Similar campaigns were erupting across the country and 14 states liberalized abortion laws to varying degrees prior to Roe v. Wade.

In Washington State, a group of physicians concerned about the threat of illegal abortions to women's health managed to get an abortion initiative onto the state ballot in 1970. Two Seattle feminist organizations reframed the

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issue as a question of women's liberation and built a grassroots movement to fight for every vote. Women's Liberation Seattle produced and sold 10,000 copies of a pamphlet entitled "One in Four of Us Have Had or Will Have an Abortion". Rallies and meetings were held all over the state and activists leafleted and door-knocked to get the word out. In the end, the initiative passed with 56% voting in favor of women's right to an abortion.

The 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion nationwide, *Roe v. Wade*, was a historic victory for the women's rights movement. In a sequence that bears similarity to the more recent struggle for marriage equality, a conservative Supreme Court tailed the mass movement and the resulting shift in popular attitudes on abortion. The Court, representing the interests of the ruling class, was forced by the movement into action if it wanted to avoid further mass radicalization.

Women and the Labor Movement

Working class women, mostly out of the spotlight in the organized feminist movement, charted their own path toward liberation, and they did it at their workplaces and in their unions. Women entered the workforce in large numbers in the 60s and 70s, and were part of a demographic transformation of the U.S. working class that also included new industries and job categories opening to black workers and other racial minorities.

Women in traditionally female occupations like domestic workers, office workers, hospital workers, and other service workers also moved into struggle, using collective action to fight for economic demands, including demands against the rampant workplace sexism present in many service sector female-dominated jobs. Working class women engaged in a feminist battle on their own terms, where the sexist, racist and paternalistic norms that governed workplace relations were challenged in a movement that was a major contributor to the growing rejection of traditional sexist attitudes about the role of women.

For example, the working conditions of flight

attendants in the 1960s were a nightmare of female objectification: weekly weigh-ins with workers facing firing if they came in too high, maximum working age of 32 and advertising campaigns that practically invited passengers to sexually harass workers. Unionized female flight attendants ran into a wall when they tried to get their male union leadership to take action against sexism on the job. Clerical workers were viewed as low-paid "office wives" who were expected to fetch coffee and pick up lunch for male bosses. Both groups of workers created new organizations to protest their second class and often hypersexualized status in the workplace and both eventually organized new unions.

Flight attendants built Stewardesses for Women's Rights (SFWR), which developed a wide-ranging campaign of protest, legal remedies and publicity with support from the mainstream feminist movement. Clerical workers set up organizations that held protests and lobbied the government over sex discrimination in hiring, pay and promotion. The flight attendants were particularly successful in using slow-downs, sick-outs and strike threats in conjunction with SFWR to end several of the most egregiously dehumanizing policies.

Domestic workers, who were overwhelmingly black, faced the double oppression of racism and sexism on the job, and were highly exploited with virtually no legal labor protections. Domestic workers' organizations, such as the National Domestic Workers Union, often served many functions: campaigning against low pay and abusive practices, educating workers on their rights, placing workers in jobs and adjudicating grievances with employers. Despite the difficulties of organizing workers who were highly isolated, domestic worker organizations helped to win some federal legal protections and higher wages in certain regional markets.

The Revolutionary Potential of the 1970s

The overlapping movements of women in NOW, radical-feminist groups, and in

workplaces coincided with dramatic and sustained upsurge in working-class militancy. In 1970, approximately one sixth of the 27 million unionized workers went out on strike. These workers were fighting for more than increased wages and greater benefits; teachers, overwhelmingly women, struck to improve classroom policies, and expand collective bargaining rights in the public sector. Coal miners, teamsters, and auto-workers struck en masse, while simultaneously organizing reform caucuses to wrest control of their unions back to the rank-and-file. Electrical, telephone, and railroad workers mobilized hundreds of thousands in strikes which brought major sections of industry to halt.

The labor revolt, combined with radical social movements against racism and sexism, and the revolt within the U.S. military in Vietnam was creating an increasingly ungovernable situation. The Watergate scandal and subsequent impeachment of Richard Nixon showed the chaos that enveloped the US ruling class.

Tragically, however, the transformational potential of the 1970s remained unrealized. Working people, youth, women, people of color, and LGBTQ people were revolting against the establishment but their leaders failed to join together and build a new political party representing the interests of working people and all the oppressed to take on the capitalist-dominated political and economic system.

An early casualty of this failure was Nixon's largely uncontested veto of legislation that would have created universal childcare in 1971. Despite women flooding into the job market, an organized mass women's movement, and a rank and file led upsurge in the unions, no united effort was launched to fight the veto.

By 1975, the newly emerging family values far right seized ground on child care, painting it as communistic and un-American, as the backlash against the women's movement developed. The Democratic Party also began heading to the right as the capitalists moved towards neo-liberal policies. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and his firing of striking air traffic control workers a year later,

signaled the beginning of several decades of defeats for unions, which the labor movement hasn't recovered from.

Need for Marxist Leadership

Women's experiences confronting the shockingly regressive attitudes in sections of the "new left" reflected the absence of a significant genuine Marxist current in the U.S. fighting for socialist feminist ideas.

At its best, the early American radical left was on the front lines of fighting for women's rights, especially in organizing extremely exploited women workers. The Industrial Workers of the World and socialist activists like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, for example, played a key role in the famous "bread and roses" strike of 1912 by immigrant women textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts. It was also the Socialist Party which organized the first Women's Day march in 1909 in New York and inspired the Socialist International to adopt it as an international day of action for working class women the following year.

Revolutionary socialists including Marx and Engels saw the oppression of women as interwoven with the whole history of class society. They concluded that while fighting tooth and nail for every gain possible for working women today, full liberation could only be won by ending the rule of the capitalists.

Armed with a genuine Marxist program, tens of thousands of fighters for women's liberation, black liberation and workers power could have joined together in the U.S. in the '70s to build a powerful revolutionary current in a broad mass workers party. The historic tasks of the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s remain to be completed: women continue to face obstacles in reproductive rights, employment, sexual violence and more. A new women's movement is needed alongside a mass workers movement that based on the lessons of the past, challenges the capitalist system itself in a decisive fight for women's liberation. ☪

Lessons of the Ginger Campaign

Socialist Alternative's Approach to Elections

Calvin Priest & Chris Gray

This is the third article in a series on last year's Ginger Jentzen campaign for Minneapolis City Council

We live an era of social crisis. In the year since Trump ascended to the White House, big debates have opened up about how to stop his reactionary agenda and a new generation of young people have taken to the streets. Millions are asking: how do we defeat the racist forces emboldened by Trump; how do we stop the seemingly endless tragedies of gun violence; and how do we address the huge inequality, poverty and alienation that plague U.S. society?

Last fall, Socialist Alternative's Minneapolis City Council campaign for Ginger Jentzen nearly elected a second Marxist to office, in addition to Kshama Sawant in Seattle. In both Seattle and Minneapolis, Socialist Alternative led the way in passing a \$15 minimum wage, in building the fight for rent control, and for taxing the rich and big business. We have used elections, and elected office, as weapons with which to fight for the interests of working class people and youth, and have done so to powerful effect. But fundamentally, we disagree with much of the rest of the left about the role of elections and how to approach them.

Over the course of the nine-month-long Ginger Jentzen campaign, we saw how different progressive forces oriented toward the Minneapolis elections, and how many of the debates currently taking place played themselves out on the terrain of Midwest city politics. We think there is much to learn that is useful for the broader political discussion.

Our Revolution & the Left Electoral Challenge

Bernie Sanders and his supporters launched Our Revolution in the final months of the 2016 presidential election as an organization primarily aimed at reforming the Democratic Party. In Minneapolis, following Trump's election in November, Our Revolution Twin Cities hosted meetings of approximately 700 people, with trainings aimed at bringing a progressive challenge by running for City Hall.

While positioned to the left of incumbents, the Democratic candidates backed by Our Revolution spanned a wide range of political tendencies. Instead of running its own candidates where others could not be recruited, or threatening to withhold endorsements where candidates would not base themselves on a clear left political program - like rent control,



The Ginger Jentzen campaign made an issue out of not taking corporate donations.

taxing the rich and strong community oversight to hold police accountable - Our Revolution focused instead on the pragmatic goal of winning a majority on City Council. This led them to abandon their leverage and support a number of candidates with cautious campaigns, many of whom did not even follow Bernie Sanders' example of rejecting corporate cash.

Our Revolution did play a progressive role in putting some leftward pressure on candidates in the endorsement process, especially forcing candidates to embrace a \$15 minimum wage. However after getting endorsed many veered back under establishment pressure toward status quo politics.

Even where confronted with a clear left program, as in the case of Ginger's campaign, Our Revolution chose to hedge its bets, ultimately endorsing both Ginger and Democrat Steve Fletcher, giving Fletcher important progressive cover in spite of his pro-corporate program. While we have had a very sympathetic approach to Our Revolution at every stage, we think the weaknesses of their approach in Minneapolis was rooted in their project of reforming the Democratic Party and the narrow political calculus it leads to.

The Green Party and Independent Politics

The Green Party candidate in Minneapolis' Ward 3, Samantha Pree-Stinson, got around 10% of the vote in our race, reflecting in part a genuine base of people who saw voting for a woman of color as an important step

to combat the realities of systemic racism in Minneapolis.

Unfortunately, Pree-Stinson ran to the right of both the Green Party's program and our main Democratic Party opponent, Steve Fletcher. She counterposed entrepreneurship to working class victories like \$15/hr, blamed rent control for rising housing prices, claimed that our slogan "Not for Sale" referenced slavery, and implied that Ginger's presence in the election showed the limits of Socialist Alternative's commitment to fighting racism (an argument she didn't level against our Democratic opponents). She pointedly ran against Socialist Alternative's campaign rather than either of the corporate candidates, with ongoing political attacks on Ginger in social media and candidate forums.

While the Green Party correctly identifies the need for an alternative to the two corporate-dominated parties, they have unfortunately increasingly elevated independent politics into a goal in and of itself, an approach which can risk sacrificing the interests of working class people. The Greens have played an important role in fighting for independent politics, but they need to refocus on the political programs of the candidates they support as well as orient more toward social struggles. Allowing pro-corporate candidates to run on the Green ballot line, and even backing them up in Pree-Stinson's case with national party support, raises real questions about their direction.

At the same time there is a relentless assault on 2016 Green presidential candidate Jill Stein taking place, trying to link her to Russia as part of a smear campaign to

intimidate independent candidates, disgracefully backed by Democratic leaders. While we do have some criticisms of Stein's campaign as we have explained before, we endorsed and supported her candidacy for president and we completely reject these reactionary attacks.

DSA and the Democratic Party Ballot Line

Many progressives argue that using the Democratic Party's ballot line is the best way to get insurgent left candidates elected. At present, live debates on this question are taking place within the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Much of the left of DSA currently supports the idea of pragmatic use of the ballot line of the Democratic Party, while at the same time registering doubts about whether it can be turned into a genuine left party. Partly in response to this debate, a new left caucus within DSA (the Refoundation Caucus) has been initiated that argues for running independent socialist candidates to build toward a new mass party, and which has begun a joint initiative with Movement for a People's Party (formerly Draft Bernie).

Last year the DSA endorsed a number of independent candidates, including Ginger Jentzen. Unlike Our Revolution, they did not also endorse our Democratic opponent, Steve Fletcher. But at the same time, around the country a number of DSA candidates ran as Democrats.

It is generally true that in a given election cycle running on a Democratic ballot line can make it easier to get elected. However this one-election-at-a-time approach contains within it a major strategic concession to big business. It helps block the development of what will really be needed to win major progressive change: a new working class party independent of corporate cash that works alongside social movements rather than acting as a brake on them.

While we think that the forces do not yet exist outside the Democratic Party to launch a new working class or even broad left party at this moment, we need to take important steps right now to prepare the ground. This means rejecting the pressures to be drawn into the Democratic Party or to adopt a political program more tolerable to Democratic leaders in order to maximize chances of endorsement or winning a given election. Instead we advocate running independently on a clear left program as a key step in the direction of a new party, and using such campaigns to boldly fight

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Mexico City: Students Protest Against Police Kidnappings



Read more on international news at SocialistWorld.net, website of the Committee for a Workers' International.

Steve Edwards

On January 23, Mexico City high school student Marco Antonio Sanchez was arrested without cause by two officers of the city police force, who were apparently trying to get a bribe from him. He was beaten and then disappeared, and the police denied that he was in their custody. As his family and friends demanded to know what became of him, the media picked up this story. Five days later, he turned up 20 miles away - wandering disoriented, wearing another person's clothes and having been beaten, tortured, and drugged so badly that he didn't even recognize his own family. A horrific photograph showing him beaten, emaciated, and terrified went viral. Today, a court is waiting for Marco to recover sufficiently to testify against his captors.

Over the last two decades more than 6,000 minors have disappeared in Mexico. All of Mexico remembers the disappearance three years ago of the 43 students from

Ayotzinapa, in which the police and the government were involved in both the crime and the cover-up.

The day after Marco's release, Sunday Jan 28, his parents addressed a crowd of 1,500 students and teachers outside his high school. Members of Izquierda Revolucionaria, its youth wing Students Union, Sindicato des Estudiantes (SE) and the revolutionary socialist feminist organization, Libres y Combativas went to this meeting which decided by a 2:1 vote to blockade the school for 24 hours on Monday. The original demands were simple and echoed those of Ayotzinapa:

For the release in good health of comrade Marco Antonio Sánchez Flores!

They took him alive and we want him alive!

Izquierda Revolucionaria is a small but growing organization of revolutionary feminists and socialists that is affiliated with the Committee for a Workers' International. One member is a student at Marco Antonio's school, High School #8,



A demonstration for Marco Antonio Sanchez.

which is one of a group of 13 very large high schools linked to the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). These high schools have 8-10,000 students each while UNAM is enormous, with a population of 300,000 students and a long tradition of Left-wing activism.

Rebeca and Marcos, two student comrades of Izquierda Revolucionaria and the Sindicato des

Estudiantes take up the story:

"[Izquierda Revolucionaria's] contribution was to argue for wider demands and to keep the protests going, not only for justice and support for Marco, but to stop the criminalization of youth, against the new internal security law that allow the military to intervene in demonstrations, and against the epidemic of homicides and disappearances in

the country. We helped build for the march by raising these political demands. We also collected donations from students and teachers to print thousands of flyers and posters.

The march on February 8 went from High School #8 to the University. About 500 people marched but many more students were out participating in other ways, like forming brigades to go to the subway stations and pass out leaflets. Two schools were completely shut down, so that's about 15- 16,000 thousand students who stayed away, with partial shutdowns in the other schools.

The most important thing that [Izquierda Revolucionaria] brought to the movement is a way forward. There are various political groups in every school but we can offer them a way to link the anger of hundreds of youth with a political alternative - only in this way can we win the involvement of the millions." ✪

Lula Conviction Confirmed

Defend Democratic Rights and Build a Socialist Alternative in Brazil

This is a shortened version of a statement by Liberdade, Socialismo E Revolucao (LSR), the co-thinkers of Socialist Alternative in Brazil. You can find the full version of this article on SocialistAlternative.org.

On January 24, the conviction of ex-Brazilian President and leader of the Workers Party (PT), Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, was upheld by a Federal Tribunal. The objective of this second conviction of Lula is to eliminate the 2018 presidential election candidate who, regardless of our position on him, leads all opinion polls.

Unelected judicial officials want to make decisions themselves which must only be taken by a popular vote. The political nature of this case is even clearer when we see that not one leader of the main right-wing party nor a single banker - who are notorious players in corruption - have been condemned, imprisoned, or removed from their position.

While maintaining all of our political differences and criticisms of Lula's political project, we also unwaveringly maintain that the actions of the bourgeois justice system in

Lula's case open a dangerous precedent for the left, social movements, and the democratic rights of the Brazilian people.

The persecution of those who dissent, organize, and mobilize endangers workers, young people, women, indigenous people, LGBTQ people, artists, intellectuals, etc. The imprisonment of Rafael Braga, who was convicted in connection with street protests that shook Brazil in 2013, became a symbol of this situation. Another dramatic example was the criminalization of 18 youths from Sao Paolo for protesting against current President Temer. New repressive legislation which comes from the deposed Dilma government, such as the anti-terrorist law, is now being used against protesters. The use of the army to repress the march in Brasilia in May 2017 is a dark precedent.

Lula is No Alternative

Despite its peculiarities, the governments of the PT, led by Lula and Dilma, did not carry out any type of structural change. Lula's presidency was characterized by a search for class

conciliation - whereby supposedly everyone would win, the billionaires and the poor - and conciliation between political forces. Suffice it to remember that Temer was Lula's chosen Vice Presidential candidate.

With the impeachment maneuver led by Temer against Dilma in 2016, the ruling class wanted to rearrange the political landscape in order to step up their attacks on the working class in the context of the Brazilian and international capitalist crisis. The big bourgeoisie wanted more than the PT government could give. The corrupt, unpopular, coup plotters' government of Temer served this purpose, guaranteeing the approval of the labor law counter-reform, the freezing of public spending, privatizations, and handovers of public wealth to foreign capital. For them, it is fundamental that in the 2018 elections there is no threat to the continuity of these attacks from any future government.

Unity in Struggle

LSR never supported the governments of Lula or the PT. As part of the Party of

Socialism and Liberty (PSOL) and of the struggle for the rebuilding of a mass socialist left in Brazil, we were on the side of the struggles of workers for rights and demands denied by these governments. Our alternative is a united front which unites the socialist left and social movements in an anti-capitalist socialist alternative for Brazil.

In the struggle to build a united front, its forces must fight against all attacks, including attacks on democratic rights. Denouncing the removal of Lula as a candidate is part of this struggle. However, this position does not mean supporting the positions of Lula or the PT.

What is needed now is a mass movement against all attacks underway. A movement in which Lula's name does not overshadow that of Rafael Braga or the 18 imprisoned youths of Sao Paolo. We must build a movement which defeats the attacks on public pensions, cancels the other counter-reforms imposed by the corrupt parliament, and at the same time fights for guaranteed rights for all. ✪

Opioid Crisis Rages On As Politicians Protect Big Pharma

Kory Lester

More than 115 people die every day in America after overdosing from opioid use. Fentanyl, heroin, prescription painkillers, and similar drugs contribute to what is the leading cause of death for people under the age of 50. Millions have been poured into programs designed to combat this crisis, yet very little progress has been made.

The past three decades have been marked by neoliberal attacks on working-class people and the poor. This has meant growing unemployment, stagnant wages, and cuts to crucial social services. The opioid epidemic has been concentrated in areas where the main employer has left in search of cheaper labor, whether that be overseas or in different parts of the country. There is no question that a society riddled with addiction is a society in profound crisis.

Nationwide, life expectancy rates have dropped for the second year in a row marking a trend that doesn't appear to be slowing down. There are not sufficient programs in place to prevent or treat people before and during opioid use. Health care, and crucially mental health care, is not available to everyone as it should be which only exacerbates the situation. There is a link between painkiller/opioid use and depression and, for many, using opiates is the only way to temporarily relieve the pain. In order to actually solve the crisis of opioid addiction, we need to address the root causes in society that lead people down a path of addiction.

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker



Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker signs a 2016 law that has done little to address the opioid crisis.

has merely acknowledged this crisis, pledging to provide "treatment that actually makes sense." Baker's \$100 million plan features involuntary hospitalization for people deemed a danger to themselves or others. Were this to pass, it would serve as an enormous invasion of citizens rights. Those suspected of being a "danger" could be held up to 72 hours against their will, which could be extended with court approval.

The proposal also includes a system of screening school students to determine how likely they are to use drugs. This arbitrary

system would do little but continue the culture of alienation in schools and marginalize those added to this list. Baker's proposal leaves out a crucial player in this epidemic: the pharmaceutical industry. While Baker seeks a five-year minimum charge for anyone involved in the sale of opioids, the biggest sellers and pushers of opioids – big pharma and health insurance companies – aren't prevented from pushing doctors to freely prescribe their big profit makers. This is a clear indication of the influence big pharma has on the pockets of our politicians and they are

buying their way out of responsibility.

Treating opioid users as criminals would do little in the way of helping anybody. 76% of those jailed end up returning, meaning these people will never see proper treatment or the care and tenderness necessary to combat addiction. The failed War on Drugs shows how ineffective it is to lock people away for addiction, something that should be treated as a public health issue.

Shifting government spending away from our bloated military and toward public education, a jobs program, and affordable housing would be a massive step in addressing the conditions that lead to addiction in the first place. Despair as a result of the pressure capitalism puts the working class under leads people to addiction without the support necessary to combat it. Better and more abundant jobs along with stable housing could cut at the core of this crisis. Safe injection sites would also go a long way toward fostering a better environment and preventing alienation of addicts as well as lowering the number of deaths due to overdose.

It has become abundantly clear that universal health care must also include a sweeping program of mental health support. A country that makes a point to put military recruiters in schools has no excuse to not have therapists and social workers in them as well. Poverty, lack of health care, lack of affordable housing – these conditions create the epidemic. To make any progress we need more than expensive band-aids. ✪

The Graduate Students Struggle to Unionize at Columbia University

Michaela Ciovacco

In January 2017, the National Labor Relations Board confirmed the right of Columbia University graduate students to unionize after the students voted 1,602 to 623 to join the United Automobile Workers (UAW) in December 2016. But more than a year after the research and teaching assistants' decision to unionize, Columbia University declared their refusal to bargain with the union.

I met with Carmen Lopez, a postdoctoral researcher at Columbia University, who works with some of the research assistants involved in this union struggle.

Why did Columbia University graduate students vote to join the United Automobile Workers?

Carmen Lopez: A vote to unionize is a vote for a better salary and benefits package, which of course are important concerns

to the graduate students. But overall I think their key demand is to have a say in working conditions. It is a question of democracy in the workplace. The students are unionizing under the UAW concretely because the union have been involved for many years in organizing tens of thousands of workers in academia from grad students to postdocs.

Are graduate students from all departments involved in unionizing?

CL: Yes, and the administration has tried to divide research assistants (RAs) from teacher assistants (TAs). However, the grad students are now more tightly united after facing the administration's refusal to bargain.

What obstacles are the grad students facing now that Columbia University has decided not to enter into bargaining?

First, let's be clear, as it stands right now,

Columbia is breaking the law. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has ruled in favor of the grad Student Union and certified their union so Columbia has a legal mandate to sit and bargain. However, under the new NLRB appointees of the Trump administration Columbia is hoping that this decision can now be revoked. In order to avoid this trap, the students should build their power as workers and force Columbia to sit with them to bargain.

What is the plan of action for the newly unionized graduate students?

CL: Last week the union announced they would hold a strike vote if the university doesn't bargain. The date of the vote and actual strike is pending. A plan to strike is controversial among the workers, specifically for the RAs because they would have to strike for a longer period of time to have a disruptive

effect on Columbia, which means delaying their PhDs. In contrast, the TAs have the power to disrupt daily classes during a strike.

What would a successful establishment of a graduate student union mean for students/workers in other private universities?

CL: I think this grad student unionization is extremely important because it contributes to the growing national movement of unionization within academia. It also exposes the true interests of private universities, like Columbia University, which is profits and prestige. This conflicts with the school's stated mission of research and education. The only way to change this is to ensure that those who perform the research and education have the collective strength to resist a stronger voice than the university's president and board of trustees. ✪

Lessons of Ginger Campaign

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for left and socialist ideas that mobilize working people and youth into struggle. We welcome the dramatic growth of DSA to 30,000 members, but disagree with them on this fundamental question of the need for working class independence in politics.

Elections and Social Movements

Many progressives see elections and winning elected office as the main path to change society, and as the midterm elections approach more and more people are understandably looking to the ballot box to deal a blow to Trump and the Republicans. Socialist Alternative views elections as one of many tools the working class can use to fight for its interests, but see social movements and the collective power of working people as the key vehicles for change. The left's tactics around social movements and elections should go hand in hand.

Socialist Alternative uses election campaigns to build the strongest possible grassroots struggles to force concessions from the establishment, whether or not the individual campaign wins or loses.

The Ginger Jentzen campaign fought unapologetically for rent control and taxing the rich to fund affordable housing because that's what working people need, and because we correctly anticipated that we could mobilize powerfully around these bold demands. We knew the Democratic establishment was fiercely opposed to rent control, but our goal was to advance these struggles not curry favor or win a Democratic endorsement. And we succeeded: we forced rent control front and center in the Minneapolis elections and built strong momentum on the issue which has continued to the present day. We did the same with Ty Moore's 2013 Minneapolis City Council campaign on the \$15 minimum wage, and used it as a springboard to launch the fight for \$15 which ultimately won out in spite of years of Democratic opposition.

It is understandable that many are looking to reform



Attack mailers from Minneapolis Works! didn't hesitate to use sexism to keep Ginger Jentzen out of City Hall.

the Democratic Party. But turning the Democrats into a party for working people would require far more than electing left Democrats. The party as whole would need to reject corporate campaign contributions. It would need a binding platform and genuine democratic structures capable of holding its elected officials accountable. But Democratic Party leaders would sooner leave their party than accept such conditions.

The Minneapolis Democratic Party (DFL) establishment was fully prepared to break with its own platform to defend business interests. Powerful Democratic donors did not bat an eye in donating to "Minneapolis Works!"; the corporate PAC dedicated to opposing key sections of the DFL platform like \$15 an hour, affordable housing and police reform. Democrats criticized Ginger far more loudly than they did Tim Bildsoe, a former Republican who cynically adopted the DFL label while backed by a "who's who" of corporate interests.

This is why Socialist Alternative calls for working people to build their own political party. Ginger's campaign confirmed again what Bernie Sanders' campaign outlined: that lots of people are looking for fundamental change. We believe that organizing around class issues is the best way to win over the many who are currently alienated by the political establishment to join us in fighting for a different kind of society. ☘

Read the full version of this article at SocialistAlternative.org

Dreamers Betrayed

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serious mistake.

We Can't Wait Until November

The leadership of the Democratic Party have shown that they are incapable of holding the line against Trump. Even if they regain control of the House, it is clear that Schumer and Pelosi are opposed to bringing impeachment proceedings against Trump or pushing for Medicare for All legislation.

Building a real mass movement around a program that speaks to the needs of working people will also be necessary the day after the Democrats take control of the House and unfortunately they will still be unwilling to do it. While we sympathize with those who seek to turn the Democrats into a "people's party," the past year's experience reinforces why we need a new party free of corporate influence that bases itself on social struggle. But the betrayals of the leadership will only sharpen the anger of ordinary Democrats and increase the tensions which point toward a massive internal crisis.

From the start of Trump's administration, it was clear that attacks on immigrants were a central part of his agenda. When Trump's Muslim ban was announced, thousands spontaneously occupied the airports. There was a massive willingness to fight but no leadership from the Democrats or mass organizations really prepared to carry

this fight forward on a sustained basis.

The passivity and weakness of the Democratic leadership was unfortunately entirely predictable. The real tragedy is that no other force - whether the unions, immigrant and civil rights organizations, or genuine progressives like Bernie Sanders - has stepped into the breach.

This is why the marvelous example of youth standing up to Trump, the Republicans, and the NRA in the wake of the Parkland massacre is so important. These young people are not prepared to accept hollow Republican condolences or to "wait until November." They are demanding action now and are ramping up the pressure by organizing a national student walkout on March 14 and a massive march in Washington on March 24. The teacher unions who have been relentlessly campaigning against Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos should be mobilizing to take action alongside students.

Demanding action on the public health crisis of gun violence is an excellent starting point. Millions of young people also completely reject the racist, sexist, and xenophobic agenda of this administration. Let's win the fight for basic gun control measures and give schools the resources needed to help students in crisis. This youth fight-back can be a critical part of building a wider struggle against the whole agenda of the right and to drive Trump out. ☘

Market Correction

continued from p. 3

The current instability in the financial system is a reminder that Wall Street and the big banks learned nothing since the crisis of 2008. This time, there should be no bailouts, but an open investigation of their criminal practices and bringing the financial system under democratic public ownership and control. Other key sectors including the energy industry, transportation and health care also should be brought into democratic public ownership alongside a massive public investment in rebuilding the nation's infrastructure on the basis of renewable energy creating millions of good, well paid jobs. This is the only way that investment can be directed to benefit the vast majority and not the profits of a tiny few - a democratic socialist system. ☘

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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



BUILD A MASS WOMENS MOVEMENT

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY 2018

Keely Mullen

On the first day of Donald Trump's presidency, millions of people took part in the Women's Marches across the country to voice their fierce opposition to Trump's sexism and bigotry. Since then, the #MeToo movement has come to the fore throughout the United States with women bravely sharing their stories and demanding an end to sexual harassment and violence. Hundreds of thousands came out to this year's Women's Marches with a hunger to carry the movement forward.

In order to build on the #MeToo momentum, a growing women's movement needs to fight back against all forms of sexism that affect the majority of women in the U.S. like lack of affordable housing, low wages, and lack of access to high quality reproductive care. With 54% of American women saying they have experienced "unwanted and inappropriate sexual advances" at some point in their lives, sexual harassment and assault are some of the starkest examples of the violence women face under capitalism. However the attacks certainly do not stop there and neither can our movement.

Housing

A lack of financial resources and options

is the number one reason that victims of domestic violence cannot leave abusive relationships.

When women are trapped in violent and abusive relationships, they are often asked "why did you stay?" For many, the answer is that they can't afford to leave. There is a dire lack of affordable housing in many major cities. Not only is there a danger of becoming homeless after leaving an abusive partner, the act of even reporting a partner for domestic abuse could lead to an eviction. The women's movement should fight for rent control and publicly funded high quality affordable housing paid for by taxing the super rich!

Wages

Women make up the majority of low wage earners in virtually every state.

Women - black and Latina women in particular - make up a drastically disproportionate number of low wage earners in the U.S. Women make up 58% of those who work in occupations that pay less than \$11 an hour and 69% of those in occupations who make less than \$10 an hour. The majority of these women are single and nearly a third have one or more children at home. The criminally low wages paid to millions of poor and working-class women means they are at an increased

risk of extreme food and housing insecurity. Super-exploitation has always been essential to the capitalists' ability to make profits - racism and sexism are essential tools to keep working people divided. With women making up such a disproportionate majority of low wage earners, the women's movement should join the energetic fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage that has won major victories in cities across the country!

Health Care

Nearly 20 million American women ages 13-44 in need of publicly funded birth control lack access to clinics that provide it.

Trump and the Republican Party have repeatedly attacked Planned Parenthood in specific and a woman's right to choose more generally. At state level, the Republicans have forced through one restriction on reproductive rights after another. These attacks have disproportionately affected poor women and women of color. Outrageously, women forced to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term face quadrupled odds of living below the federal poverty line. Women should not have to make the choice between being economically secure or having children. This is why we need to fight poverty as we take up the fight for free reproductive care and Medicare

for All. The Roe v. Wade victory was won under the conservative Nixon administration because women mounted a massive campaign to fight for it. We need to do the same under this Trump administration!

Build the Movement!

The #MeToo movement has successfully taken down serial abusers like Larry Nassar and Harvey Weinstein and it has given confidence to millions of women who want to fight back against sexism on all fronts.

In order to win high quality affordable housing, \$15 an hour minimum wage, and Medicare for All as well as real reforms to tackle sexual violence and harassment in the workplace, the women's movement will need to link up with the struggles of the broader working class, especially black people, immigrants, and young people. As well as a mass movement, we need an independent political force in the form of a new party that is truly accountable to working-class people unlike the Democratic Party which is tied by a thousand threads to the insurance companies and big business. Sexism cannot be fully rooted out of a system that needs it to survive, so our fight to end sexism, racism and inequality requires a new system organized on a truly democratic, socialist basis! ✪