

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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# FIGHT FOR A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR WORKING PEOPLE

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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 JOINED SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

After the betrayal of Bernie Sanders by the DNC in 2016, I was left disillusioned with the Democratic Party and looking for a way forward. I had always been interested in politics, but Bernie's campaign was my first real experience with it – I was so energized by his working-class politics, by his calls to build grassroots movements to fight for the same issues I cared about, that I became an active volunteer in his presidential campaign even though I was too young to vote. My frustrations with the Democratic Party and the corporate establishment eventually blossomed into a frustration with the entire capitalist system. I wanted to be part of something, some organization fighting not just against injustice but also for a better world, but I knew that something wouldn't be the Democratic Party.

I took moving away from home in the Philadelphia suburbs and going to college in a new city as an opportunity to learn more about socialism and join a fighting organization that could point the way forward for how to fight against all injustice, oppression, and exploitation. As a socialist, I've become more and more aware of the links between social and economic oppression, and why the fight for our collective liberation, particularly women's and LGBTQ liberation, is tied up in a global struggle against capitalism and all material inequalities.

I had my frustrations with the limitations of liberal feminism, how it champions the equality of wealthy, white women within a system that thrives when we are most divided and sustains itself by diminishing our rights,



## Rebecca Rovins

Student  
Pittsburgh, PA

wages, health, education, and livelihoods.

Socialism and socialist feminism are the way forward that I had been searching for, because the changes we need to win women's and LGBTQ liberation can't be realized within an inherently unequal system. Through working-class solidarity across all genders, a better world that prioritizes our economic independence and bodily autonomy is possible if we fight for it!

I'm so proud to be a member of Socialist Alternative working to build a socialist feminist movement and ultimately a better world. Being part of the international struggle for socialism gives me hope and purpose – we have a world to win! ✦

## Financial Times: Bosses Quake at Workplace "Deviance"

Keely Mullen

"Welcome to the age of insubordination" says a March *Financial Times* article. Writer Andrew Hill's piece reads like a war cry to bosses around the world. Hill warns that what was once simply a kink in the matrix has become common practice: "underlings refusing a direct order."

Using last year's Google walkouts against sexual harassment as a prime example, Hill outlines a development that socialists have been celebrating – the growing fightback of working-class people against exploitation and inequality. Hill details the conundrum facing bosses everywhere: the "suggestion box" doesn't fit all of their workers' complaints anymore and responding with force to insubordination only provokes greater outrage! What are they to do!

What Hill isn't concerned with is the conundrum facing workers that may lead to this dissent. Wages so low we can't afford any sort of emergency and health-care coverage so barren we wouldn't dream of going to the hospital unless we risk losing a limb (but who needs both their legs, anyway?).

Hill describes a few different types of insubordination. One of which being disruption. This is detailed as staff misbehaving or work-to-rule, an industrial action where workers do no more than the

minimum required by their contract or job description.

One step up from disruption is: demonstrate. This is when employees turn to outright protest which, as he describes, "may turn to mutiny" (Wait 'til he learns what a strike is!).


While this article is billed as having some suggestion on how bosses can "absorb and respond" to dissent, it offers no new solution to bosses and refrains from describing the myriad of tools they already use to monitor, manage, discipline, and discourage workers from fighting back. Though these tools will certainly evolve and escalate, we have no doubt that the working class will in turn find ways to push back and defeat all these stratagems.


Hill's article ends with an apt observation, he writes, "the relationship between workplace power and deviance is 'an interlocking system'... as more power moves from coaches [bosses] to players [workers], expect that system to come under greater strain." As working-class people move into struggle in our workplaces, we will not find allies in our bosses or the super rich. And necessarily, as our workplace power grows so too will our "deviance." If that deviance is organized, well led, and carried out with the maximum unity of workers globally, it could spell the end of all forms of exploitation, inequality, and oppression. ✦


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## Right-Wing Hypocrisy:

# Anti-Semitism Campaign Targets Omar and the Left

**Leon Pinsky**

In recent weeks, the right, but also the leadership of the Democratic Party have waged a campaign targeting Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN) for making comments about the relations between the right-wing pro-Israel lobby group, AIPAC, and U.S. politicians.

The attacks from the right have an out-right Islamophobic tinge, but they are also part of a wider campaign directed not just at Omar but the new left in Congress and in society using the charge of “anti-Semitism.”

Leading the charge against Omar were right-wing Republicans and Fox News, but also Democratic Party figures such as Nancy Pelosi and Bill DeBlasio. Donald Trump said that Omar should be “ashamed of herself” and went as far as calling on her to resign, temporarily switching off his war against political correctness. Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) stated, “This kind of intolerance has no place in Congress – or anywhere in American society.”

Responding to the attack, some Democratic figures came out in Omar’s defense. Most notably, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and even Kamala Harris have sided with Omar. This reflects the widening divisions in the Democratic Party.

## Trying to Stifle Criticism of Israeli Policy

These attacks on Omar are a continuation of the corporate establishment and media in the U.S. branding any criticism of the policies of the Israeli government as anti-Semitic. It is not only “about the Benjamins” as Omar claimed in a tweet. But criticizing the Israeli government means, in effect, criticizing U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Besides attacking Omar, the establishment has gone after those who expressed public support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign which demands that Israel end the occupation of Palestinian land.

A few days before Omar’s tweets, the U.S. senate passed a bipartisan bill 77-23 that allows states to refuse to do business with companies who have boycotted Israel. While we have disagreements with some aspects of BDS, we completely oppose these attacks on the democratic right to advocate this position.

This is a panicked reaction to the growing criticism of Israeli policy within U.S. society in the last few years. With the rise of the racist right-wing Netanyahu government in Israel, a growing number of people in the U.S., including many young Jews, find it increasingly difficult to support Israeli policies toward the Palestinian population.



*Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN).*

While Socialist Alternative defends Omar’s right to criticize the policies of the Israeli elite and to expose their real relations with U.S. politicians, we do not necessarily agree with how she has posed the issues now or in the past.

Recently, both Omar and Tlaib made references to some U.S. politicians holding “dual loyalty.” This is a bad line of attack. It was used in the past, for example, by the pro-capitalist right against socialists in regards to the Soviet Union. Marxists do not pose the question of support for reactionary

regimes abroad in terms of “national loyalty.” We stand rather for international solidarity of working people and all the oppressed against imperialism and all its client states.

## U.S. Interests in the Middle East

In 2012, Omar tweeted that “Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of

*continued on p. 10*

## Sanders 2020 Campaign Kicks Off With Thousands Attending Rallies

**Joshua Koritz**

Bernie Sanders kicked off his 2020 presidential campaign with two rallies of over 10,000 people each in Brooklyn and in Chicago over the March 2-3 weekend. Taken with his impressive initial fundraising – over \$10 million in the first week, with no money taken from corporations or big business – Sanders is acting like a front runner.

Bernie powerfully explained in his Brooklyn speech how all the issues he campaigned on in 2016 had been first rejected by the mainstream media and political establishment and now were hugely popular, like Medicare for All, free public college, and \$15 minimum wage.

### Learning from 2016

It is a testament to the changing perception of Sanders and socialism that he can boldly campaign to win. However, we must strike a note of caution that the Democratic Party establishment is no less opposed to

Bernie this time around and will work overtime to prevent him from winning. We need to be equally as clever – Socialist Alternative argued that running as an independent would have taken away the Democratic Party’s ability to sabotage Bernie in the primaries, and freed his supporters to campaign through the general election.

With one million volunteers and a growing campaign war chest, Bernie’s campaign is already proving to be a powerful force. The infrastructure being built up needs democratic structures so that ordinary working people can have a say in the direction of the campaign. A mass democratic organization at the base of the campaign could be used going forward to support other working-class candidates who take no corporate cash. This would lay the basis for a new left working-class party. Bernie has not yet publicly raised a strategy for overcoming the establishment opposition within the Democratic Party.

The movement around Bernie’s

campaign is vital to making progress on the progressive demands as well as building support for his candidacy. In 2016, Sanders once described his vision for the presidency as being “the Organizer in Chief,” mobilizing people from below to put pressure on Congress to pass legislation not acceptable to corporate America.

### Diverse Crowds

Political opponents of Sanders attempted to paint the rallies as mostly white and male, but attendees were greeted by diverse crowds with impressive turnouts of black New Yorkers and Latino Chicagoans. Women were also in attendance in great numbers. As you walked down the blocks-long line to get in, the diversity of his supporters was as clear as day.

Our Revolution Executive Director Nina Turner and journalist Shaun King joined Bernie at both locations and focused their messages on issues facing the black community and Bernie’s record. Polls indicate

that Bernie is starting this campaign with much greater name recognition and popularity among people of color than in 2016.

While in Los Angeles on March 21, Sanders visited UCLA workers’ picket line and was greeted enthusiastically, showing that workers moving into struggle are looking to Bernie. However, a focused approach to winning unions to support Bernie is needed. Like in 2016, Labor for Bernie groups can be started in union locals as a way to not only build support for endorsing Bernie, but importantly as way to raise support for Medicare for All and other vital policies.

While Bernie may seem like a frontrunner now, he is in for the fight of his life as the establishment settles on its best opponents and turns its guns at him, the working class, and the rest of the left. Socialists must be there to fight alongside the millions who share the hopes embodied in Sanders and his platform. ☘



# Evict Corporate Developers - Build Social Housing

**Movements of working people and renters, not greedy capitalists, will solve Seattle's housing crisis.**

**Adam Ziemkowski, Seattle**

The affordable housing crisis in the U.S. continues to reach new heights. Nearly 50 percent of all renters are cost-burdened, half a million people are homeless, and tents line the streets of many major cities. Here in Seattle, we see an extreme version of this human tragedy playing out daily. Even as the city tumbles off an affordable housing cliff, Seattle's establishment politicians – all Democrats – continue promoting corporate developers and supply-side arguments, maintaining the primacy of for-profit development and landlordism.

## Neoliberal Offensive

Following the successful fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, it was clear that the movements of ordinary people in Seattle would turn to the question of housing affordability and homelessness. In a concerted strategy to shut down public discourse on renters rights, developer impact fees, rent control, and taxing big business to fund social housing, successive Democratic mayors and city councilmembers teamed up with corporate developers in a so-called “grand bargain” that vetoed all of these public policy solutions to address the crisis, and went to war against the city's housing activists, socialists, and renters. The climax thus far of this offensive was the repeal of the Amazon Tax last summer by Mayor Durkin and most of the city council.

In the past decade of Seattle's piping-hot real estate market, billions of dollars of private profit have been made in a construction frenzy that has earned Seattle the distinction of being “the crane capital of the U.S.” for four years running. Of an estimated 31,000 new market-rate apartments opened from 2008-2017, 92 percent were luxury units. Rents have soared more than 75 percent since 2011 to an average of \$2,136 per month – completely unaffordable to the average working class household.

A 2017 city report found 86.5 percent of eviction filings were for nonpayment of rent, 52.3 percent of which were one month or less behind. Women and people of color were hit hardest – 81 percent of eviction filings for \$100 or less in unpaid rent were against women and 51.7 percent were against people of color, with black renters experiencing eviction filings at a rate 4.5 times higher than others.

## Affordable Housing and Renters Rights Victories

Despite concerted opposition from most of city hall, Seattle's affordable housing movement – including socialist Councilmember Kshama Sawant, has won important victories. Kshama and Socialist Alternative played a key role in pushing the city council to pass a resolution calling for the state ban on rent control to be lifted; blocking the construction of a \$160 million police precinct and winning \$29 million for publicly-owned affordable housing; as well as several landmark tenant rights bills.

But while the affordable housing movement in Seattle has won some important battles, our movement still has a war to win.

A recent meeting of Councilmember Sawant's Renters Rights committee featured tenants at the Chateau apartments in Seattle's Central District, which has for decades housed working-class and low-income families, elderly and disabled community members, and Section 8 voucher holders. The tenants are facing eviction and displacement after their building was purchased by Cadence, a \$185 million development company which plans to demolish the affordable building at the end of the year to make way for smaller, higher-end apartments.

Renee Holmes, whose 88-year-old aunt Mother Gordon has lived at Chateau for nearly four decades, told the rally of more than 130 community members and housing activists “Our family came from Arkansas in the forties and settled in this area. This is the only area we [African Americans] were allowed to live in. Why does she have to leave? Why do we have to be uprooted from our communities?” Another tenant, Roselle Johnson, is the primary caregiver for her nearby elderly parents, “They depend on me. If Cadence is going to move us out, I don't know where I'm going to live. Who's going to help my parents?”

Tens of thousands more working people, especially from communities of color, have faced similarly dire circumstances in recent years.

## Tax Big Business to Build Social Housing!

A recent Sightline Institute report titled, “Why's the Rent So High for New Apartments in Seattle?” explains things from the for-profit lens of the private developer, stating, “the fundamental link between the cost of an



*“If it wasn't for Councilmember Kshama Sawant, we wouldn't even have known our building was being torn down...The developers just care about profits, but what about us, the people?” – Renee Holmes, Chateau Apartment resident & activist*

apartment and its rent is the yield required by investors. No one's going to sink a pile of money into an apartment building unless it can reliably deliver a cash flow that makes the investment worthwhile compared with other options such as the stock market.”

According to the report, as of a few years ago, investors typically expected a yield-on-cost of 5.8 percent. For a 2 percent profit, rent on a \$2,200 apartment could be cut in half to \$1,100! The report then notes, “In rapidly growing Seattle, billions of dollars flow into apartment construction annually, mostly supplied by giant institutional investors that seek to maximize returns, not social benefits. Are there people or institutions with billions of dollars to invest who are willing to accept dramatically lower returns? It seems unlikely.”

Since the private for-profit developers are clearly incapable of building housing that's affordable to working people, we need to fund public programs to build and manage the affordable housing necessary to meet the needs of residents – also called social housing. By cutting out the developers' profits from the equation it's possible to build massive numbers of homes in an extremely short amount of time.

Several real-world examples demonstrate the huge potential of public investment in social housing. An article in *The Nation* notes that massive public investments in social housing were critical components of New York City's efforts to address past affordable housing shortages: “Between the mid-1930s and 1970s, New York City saw an average of approximately 12,500 units of government-subsidized, below-market housing built each

year...In the peak years of the 1950s and 1960s, as many as 20,000 units were built.” These social housing programs provided critical affordable housing to working people on a mass scale. Sadly, decades of attacks both on social housing and rent control have largely erased those gains.

A recent report from the People's Policy Project, featured in *Mother Jones* “makes the case for a massive experiment in affordable, government-sponsored ‘social housing’ along the lines of housing built in countries like Finland and Sweden and cities like Vienna, Austria.” To address housing shortages in Sweden in the mid-sixties, the Social Democratic government built one million affordable homes in just 10 years. In Vienna, 60 percent of the population lives in social housing. While establishment politicians will immediately raise prohibitive costs as the main reason not to pursue social housing, the article notes that building 10 million units nationwide “could be covered by undoing the recent corporate tax cut signed by President Donald Trump.”

Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative argue that it's possible for Seattle and the U.S. as a whole to solve it's affordable housing crisis, but only if workers and renters join forces to build a movement independent of developers, landlords, and corporate politicians to fight for social housing, rent control, and other socialist policies that put the needs of ordinary people and our communities over developer profits. Renee Holmes summed it up well at the Renters Rights committee, “This is our city. It's our neighborhood. And we will fight for the right to live here.” ☘

# Oakland Teachers' Victory: Some Lessons Moving Forward

**Rob Rooke**

For many years the Oakland School Board has plotted its school privatization plan behind closed doors, closing neighborhood public schools and giving the keys to privately-managed charter schools. The last School Board election seemed to complete the privatizers' takeover of our District.

But everything changed on February 21, when 3,000 teachers put up picket lines all over Oakland.

Oakland teachers had had enough. A young, energized union leadership in the Oakland Education Association (OEA) promised to get more pay, lower class sizes, more support staff, and to expose the District's ultimate agenda of dismantling public education. The leadership called for a school closure moratorium as a part of negotiations, even though the issue is not technically a part of their contract.

During the strike, 95% of teachers did not go to work and over 85% walked the picket lines. Oaklanders enthusiastically sided with the teachers over the District, with 97% of students not entering struck schools, and thousands of students, parents, and supporters walking the picket lines and joining lunch-time rallies each day of the strike.

No strike had reached so many Oaklanders in recent history. Friends and neighbors discussed the strike, and few voices were heard that didn't back the teachers. OEA marched through neighborhoods in West Oakland and East Oakland chanting "Get up, get down, Oakland is a union town!"

***There are now 3,000 teachers in Oakland who have been transformed by the experience of the strike, arguing for the strike's demands, confronting scabs, and organizing themselves and their coworkers into a fighting force.***

## Tentative Agreement: How It All Went Down

Each time the School Board scheduled a meeting during the strike, a call went out for mass pickets and the Board meeting was shut down.

On the morning of the third Board meeting, March 1, seven days into the strike, teachers and parents arrived in their hundreds to block the Board from meeting. On its agenda was \$22 million in cuts, including up to 150 layoffs of SEIU classified school workers. Right at 2pm – the Board's scheduled start time – OEA leaders announced they had reached a tentative agreement (TA) with the district.

In the union's press conference the OEA leadership presented the TA as a clear victory and did not emphasize that this was not a done deal until the membership had

the chance to look at it and vote on it. The unrolling of the TA in this manner, along with the retreat from picketing the Board that day, created an incredible anger and frustration among many OEA members. This mistake at the end of the strike on the part of the leadership does not negate their incredible mobilization of teachers and supporters in the lead up and throughout the strike. In the end, the new contract includes: an 11% pay hike over four years and a 3% back-pay bonus; some small gains on hiring more support staff; and a very small decrease in class size. The teachers also won a pledge by the School Board for a five-month moratorium on school closures. There was no mention of the 24 schools slated by the District for closure.

Only elected six months earlier, the new OEA leadership had encouraged membership to get active, and the way the strike was carried out, driven by an active rank-and-file, is a clear testament to this. Learning from the LA strike where a ratification vote was rushed without adequate time for discussion, the OEA Site Rep Council voted to implement a 24 hour waiting period before the membership vote.

Forty-two percent of teachers voted to reject the TA and keep striking. This is an incredibly high vote, taken by the rank and file against their own leadership in the middle of a strike. On the day of the ratification vote, many teachers voted "yes" reluctantly. A trusted and organized rank and file group could have persuasively organized around a concrete winning strategy to continue the strike. The "no" voters, plus the reluctant "yes"

voters is a clear sign that there was a mood to keep on fighting. With the community behind them to continue the strike, they may well have been able to force the District to make a stronger offer which more closely resembled the union's demand of a 12% raise over three years (instead of 11% over 4), a larger decrease in the ratio of support staff to students, particularly for nurses, and potentially stronger language on school closures.

## What Kind of School Board Do We Want?

The Democratic Party establishment, backed by the billionaire class, has had an agenda of privatization and turning public schools into charter schools. Up until recently, this has been done behind closed doors, but the OEA has shed light on their



*One of the many rallies organized by the Oakland Education Association which drew thousands of teachers, students, and parents.*

plan and brought it fully out in the open for all of Oakland to see and understand.

The moratorium resolution won by this strike shows that the District can be moved on the topic of school closures, and winning this fight in the long term is possible. The OEA should help parents to immediately begin organizing the infrastructure for a movement that can challenge school closures when the moratorium is up and the District puts closures back on the agenda.

Twenty years ago, charter schools were the exception in Oakland. Now 30% of OUSD students attend them. We feel that unionizing charters could be a first step toward bringing charters back under direct district control, which must be our ultimate goal.

Not only would unionizing charters into the OEA help create the biggest, strongest OEA opposition to both the District and the charter bosses and billionaires, but it would make chartering much less attractive to the pro-market and viciously anti-union education reformers. School Board elections are coming up in 2020. Based on the momentum from this strike and the mass support it garnered, the OEA should back a slate of independent candidates for the School Board who are committed to three things:

1. Strong support for the school unions;
2. Recognition and opposition to what charters represent and;
3. A refusal to implement any budget cuts for our schools.

## The Power of the Working Class

The seven-day teachers' strike turned Oakland upside down. School Board meetings

were blocked to prevent cuts to public education and school gates were blocked with parked cars to keep the strike strong. These effective actions defied federal anti-labor laws and went unchallenged by police because of the teachers' near unanimous support among the wider Oakland working class. Oakland teachers, in the lead up to the strike, used the sick-out tactic to get around laws that ban secondary and lightning strikes. In addition, most classified school workers including janitors and other staff in SEIU Local 1021 did not cross the picket line and some San Francisco and Oakland charter school teachers called in sick in solidarity.

Both the LA and Oakland strikes point to how we can build a mass movement centered on the social and economic power of the working class to win Medicare for All, affordable housing for all, free college and an end to mass incarceration.

The District's plan to quietly privatize the entire Oakland school system has hit its biggest speed bump since they began their effort. There are now 3,000 teachers in Oakland who have come out of this moment more confident in their power as workers and more aware of the forces at play in the struggle to defend public education. Hundreds have now become dedicated activists in the union's army of resistance against the billionaire-backed district. They have been transformed by the experience of the strike, arguing for the strike's demands, confronting scabs, and organizing themselves and their coworkers into a fighting force. Oakland teachers have made their mark on history, and it won't be the last time. ✪



## No More Inaction on Climate Change

# Winning the Green New Deal Means Challenging Capitalism

**Elan Axelbank**

**“The one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere. So instead of looking for hope, look for action. Then, and only then, hope will come.”**

*- Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish climate activist, who helped kick off a recent wave of protest across the world against inaction on climate change.*

Hope without action on climate change is as meaningless as “thoughts and prayers” after a mass shooting. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a Special Report in October 2018 warning that by 2050, without major course correction, over 350 million more people globally will be exposed to deadly levels of heat stress; in the U.S., wildfires in the West will burn at least twice as much forest area than in the years preceding 2019; and there could be as much as \$1 trillion in damage to public infrastructure and coastal real estate. As of 2014, the U.S. was responsible for 20 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions.

For decades, it was considered radical to even accept that climate change is real. Now, there is widespread acceptance of the reality of climate change, but in the face of the political establishment’s infuriating inaction, what’s considered radical is actually proposing to address the large-scale problem with an appropriately sized solution.

This gap between the scale of the problems we face and the solutions being put forward by establishment politicians can be seen on issue after issue – whether it be obscene economic inequality, systemic racism and sexism, or the imminent climate crisis. This is a central driving force behind the politicization and radicalization among ordinary people currently taking place across the world.

### What’s in the Green New Deal

It is in this context that the Green New Deal being proposed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, self-described democratic socialist Congressperson from New York City, is gaining mass support across the country and setting the terms of the debate around what kind of action is needed to combat climate change.

As proposed by Ocasio-Cortez the Green

New Deal is a resolution, not a bill, which means it’s not binding. If passed, it sets priorities that Congress is supposed to take up by subsequently passing actual laws and policies.

The Green New Deal calls for meeting 100% of the power demand in the U.S. through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources. Although most media outlets have reported that the Green New Deal calls for 100% renewable energy by 2030, the resolution itself actually doesn’t specify a year. It calls for overhauling transportation in the U.S. to become climate-friendly. It also calls for upgrading “all existing buildings in the United States and building new buildings” to achieve maximum energy efficiency, and for the international exchange of technology, expertise, products, and funding to help other countries achieve a Green New Deal as well.

The resolution is presented as a far-reaching anti-poverty program with strong language against economic and social inequality. It calls for the creation of millions of “high-quality union jobs that pay prevailing wages, hir[ing] local workers, offer[ing] training and advancement opportunities, and guarantee[ing] wage and benefit parity for workers affected by the transition.” It also calls for a democratic and participatory process that includes workers and oppressed communities in planning, implementing, and administering the Green New Deal at the local level although it is not spelled out how this would be done in practice.

Going beyond just the environment, the Green New Deal calls for all people in the United States to be guaranteed a job with a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security. It also calls for stopping the United States’ “historic oppression” of women, people of color, and immigrants. The resolution concludes by calling on the federal government to guarantee all people high-quality health care, affordable housing, and overall economic security.

Despite being the richest country in the history of the world, not a single one of these basic needs are guarantees for an ordinary person living in the U.S. We are told it would cost too much to meet everybody’s fundamental needs and transition to 100% renewable energy. Meanwhile the three richest men in America are hoarding as much wealth as is held by the bottom half of the population. 100 corporations globally are responsible for over

70% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. The truth is that our civilization and the planet are being sacrificed so that a handful of people can continue making massive amounts of money. The Green New Deal seeks to turn this around.

### What Will it Take to Win?

The 2018 IPCC Report estimates it would cost \$900 billion per year to implement the program it says is needed. The Green New Deal is modeled on their proposals. Ocasio-Cortez proposes this should be paid for in part with a 70% marginal tax rate on all income over \$10 million. This would be a good start but not enough to fund the entire program.

Additional funding could come from taxes on the major fossil fuel corporations, big banks, and financial institutions. However, these corporations are not leaping at the opportunity to be taxed billions of dollars to address climate change. They are prepared to mount enormous opposition to the Green New Deal, and this opposition will become increasingly visible as the movement in support of it grows.

So far opposition has mainly come in the form of claims that the Green New Deal is an unrealistic fantasy. It’s “just a bunch of ideas that even as theory don’t work, let alone in the real world,” as CEO Lourenco Goncalves said (\$60 million-net worth from mining). This type of casual dismissal is often the ruling elite and politicians’ first line of argument when confronted with bold progressive ideas that threaten their interests. In the 2016 Democratic

primary, Hillary Clinton repeatedly referred to many of Bernie Sanders’ proposals, particularly Medicare for All, as “pie in the sky.”

Now, three years after Sanders popularized Medicare for All, a majority of Americans support it, including a majority of Republicans. Longtime establishment and corporate-friendly Democrats such as Corey Booker or Kamala Harris now feel forced to give verbal support of such policies in order to even be considered by most Democratic voters. This could become the case with the Green New Deal as well.

We must be careful though. There is a

massive difference between offering verbal support for the Green New Deal during a political campaign, and supporting the concrete measures required to achieve it, not to mention building the movement that will be necessary to win it. Public statements are one thing, but behind the scenes lobbyists and powerful corporate interests exert pressure and even give directives on what the politicians they fund can and cannot do.

Uniting all who want to stop the looming catastrophe requires a clear, bold set of demands. It also requires a clear understanding of how major progressive change is won. The only force capable of counteracting entrenched corporate opposition is a mass movement centered on the social and economic power of the working class.

Recently, the leadership of the AFL-CIO Energy Committee sent a public letter to the sponsors of the Green New Deal. It agreed on the need to address climate change and invest in renewable energy technologies, and noted the Green New Deal’s call for the inclusion of workers and unions in the process. They argued, however, that the resolution itself “is far too short on specific solutions that speak to the jobs of our members and the critical sectors of our economy... and makes promises that are not achievable or realistic.” It goes on to say, “We will not stand by and allow threats

to our members’ jobs and their families’ standard of living go unanswered.”

There is an element of fear-mongering here that must be challenged. The real threat to union members’ and all workers is not the Green New

Deal. It’s the manufacturing, construction, and energy sector bosses as well as the corporate establishment of both political parties, who are allowing the status quo of low wages, worsening benefits, and rising cost of living to continue, not to mention the coming disastrous effects of climate change itself.

In fact, the resolution itself calls for “high-quality union jobs..., training and advancement opportunities, and guarantees wage and benefit parity for workers affected by the transition.” This could benefit from more specificity but to label this an attack on jobs and

***The Green New Deal is gaining mass support across the country and setting the terms of the debate around what kind of action is needed to combat climate change.***





*Sunrise Movement sit-in on Nancy Pelosi's office, November 2018.*

working families' standard of living is simply untrue. Mistakenly, environmental movement has frequently taken an approach dismissive of the legitimate concerns of workers about their jobs and living standards. Ocasio-Cortez should take up their offer for further dialogue and publicly challenge these labor leaders to come to the table to discuss a united proposal that all workers and environmentalists could get behind.

There are unions nationally which are in favor of strong action on climate change such as Amalgamated Transit Union, Communication Workers of America, and National Nurses United, as well as locals of many other unions, including in the building trades. These unions should actively mobilize support for a workers' Green New Deal and show an alternative to the conservative leadership which currently dominates most unions. It is the fossil fuel bosses who must be left in the dust, not the workers who have a key strategic role in fighting for this industrial transition.

Winning a workers' Green New Deal will require the movement, including labor, not mistaking the corporate leaderships of the Democrats or Republicans as their allies, and instead mobilizing its full power with mass protests, industrial actions, and strikes.

## Workers' Green New Deal Requires Public Ownership

The reason we are in this position in the first place is that we live in a society where political and economic decisions are dictated by the profit of privately-owned companies. Since serious action would require directly attacking the interests of large sections of corporate America, the political establishment opposes any comprehensive proposal to move rapidly to 100% renewable energy.

Even under capitalism, if a sufficiently strong mass movement is built, some aspects of the Green New Deal could be won. But to achieve a full transition to an economy based on renewable energy by 2030 will require taking unprecedented steps against the private ownership of key sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, neither Ocasio-Cortez nor

Sanders accept that we would have to move beyond the framework of capitalism to achieve these goals, which is a fundamental weakness of their approach.

As long as the main energy companies are privately owned and run on the basis of profit and competition, they will fight against the Green New Deal and the scale of the funding, planning, and cooperation needed for the full plan simply cannot be achieved. We will need to take the main fossil fuel companies into public ownership, under the democratic control of working people, to actually carry out such a far-reaching plan, especially in such a short amount of time.

The transition will have to include a complete infrastructure overhaul, requiring taking key sections of the manufacturing and construction industries into public ownership as well. On the basis of a democratically agreed upon plan, public transportation could be

massively expanded. New high-speed rail-ways and trains could be built, and the auto industry could finally divorce itself from big oil and rapidly transition to producing electric vehicles only. Road and highway infrastructure would need to be updated to coincide with this change.

As mentioned above, a plan of this scale would cost approximately \$900 billion annually, a huge number. But the resources already exist for an initiative on this scale. Collectively, just the top fifteen banks in the U.S. own \$13.5 trillion. They will never give up this money for the common good voluntarily, so taking the big banks and major financial institutions into public ownership is also a necessary part of this transition.

Given that the billionaire class will fiercely oppose removing these key industries from private ownership, it will only happen as the result of a united mass working-class movement

fighting consciously to do so. A vital tool for this struggle is building a new working class party with a clear socialist program.

We completely agree with the broader goals of the Green New Deal to end poverty and oppression but these too cannot be achieved within the framework of this system and will require revolutionary change. Taking the key sectors of the economy into public ownership to establish a democratically planned economy based around human need would lay the basis for the development of an egalitarian socialist society, under which exploitation and all forms of oppression could be rooted out. With the escalation of the international climate crisis, the need for humanity to move beyond capitalism to socialism has never been posed more sharply. Join Socialist Alternative to help us fight for a workers' Green New Deal and socialism. ✊

## Cities Can Help Lead on Green New Deal



Seattle City Councilmember  
**Kshama Sawant**

facebook.com/cmksawant  
@cmksawant

The broad popularity of a Green New Deal in recent polls shows without a doubt that the American public wants their government to take bold and urgent action to combat climate change. So far every Senate Democrat who has declared a run for president in 2020 has felt compelled to endorse Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal proposal. But history has taught us that for corporate-backed politicians, supporting something on paper and in action are two very different things.

While clearly urgent action is needed on a national and international basis, cities and states can also play a key role in building the movement – just like how Seattle led the

way on \$15 an hour in 2014, which spread across the country. Campaigning to pass elements of a Green New Deal at the local and state level this year can force presidential hopefuls to demonstrate whether they actually support far reaching action to address climate change, or are using it as yet another empty campaign slogan.

That's why Socialist Alternative and I are fighting for a Green New Deal for working people in Seattle. We can create thousands of family-wage union jobs with a major expansion of mass transit and clean energy to help make Seattle 100% renewable by 2030, paid for by taxing the rich. My campaign is also calling for a major expansion of social housing – permanently affordable, energy efficient, city-owned homes centrally located and near transit lines. Seattle should use its public utilities to develop wind and solar power to replace non-renewable energy across the entire region. To really avoid

climate catastrophe we need to take the big energy corporations nationally into democratic public ownership and retool them for clean energy. The needed rapid shift away from fossil fuels will never happen if we leave the industry in the hands of CEOs and wealthy shareholders.

These would be huge steps that would make Seattle a national leader in environmental policy. Without a doubt, fossil fuel corporations and others are already gearing up to prevent a Green New Deal from becoming a reality by doubling down on donations to their chosen candidates from both establishment parties. Our movement cannot depend for survival on the very forces we are fighting against – that's why my campaign, like Bernie Sanders, refuses all corporate cash and instead relies on donations from ordinary working-class people. ✊

**Donate today at [kshamasawant.org/donate/](https://kshamasawant.org/donate/)**



A Review of David Wallace-Wells' *Uninhabitable Earth*

# Heroes and Villains in the Fight Against Climate Change

## Kele Cable

Heat waves, dust bowls, dying oceans filled with microplastics, air polluted with smoke and aerosols, spreading diseases, economic collapse, resource wars, refugee crises – such is the world of the future described by David Wallace-Wells in *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* (Tim Duggan Books, 2019). Yet, in fact, this also describes our present. As he writes, “the slowness of climate change is a fairy tale.”

Wallace-Wells describes the impacts of climate change as like a kaleidoscope: “we can be mesmerized by the threat directly in front of us without ever perceiving it clearly” (p. 143). To combat this, he deploys scientific literature to describe the “elements of chaos” that already permeate our world.

Regarding “heat death,” for example: at just four degrees of warming, the “European heat wave of 2003, which killed as many as 2,000 people a day, will be a normal summer” (p. 40). Wallace-Wells details that Saudi Arabia copes with summer temperatures nearing 120 degrees Fahrenheit by burning 700,000 barrels of oil per day, mostly to power the nation’s air conditioning. To combat the heat in the present moment is to make the heat worse later.

Not only does climate change increase the frequency and severity of wildfires, they themselves emit large amounts of greenhouse gas and destroy carbon sinks. By 2100, the U.S. may be dealing with sixteen times the amount of damage from wildfires as we see today. Their smoke contributes to hundreds of thousands of deaths every year and they can even contaminate water supplies. Worryingly, “a single wildfire [in California] can entirely eliminate the emissions gains made that year by all of the state’s aggressive environmental policies.”

While sea level rise and the displacement of hundreds of millions of people is certain, its pace is not. By 2100, Bangladesh, naval bases, the Everglades, Saint Mark’s Basilica in Venice, the White House, and most of the world’s internet infrastructure will be underwater. The planet’s beaches will disappear, thousands of years required to replenish their sands. Already, China evacuates hundreds of thousands every summer to escape flooding. Wallace-Wells warns that sea levels may rise by 260 feet over the course of thousands of years. Distressingly, the oceans themselves are dying, due to coral bleaching, dead zones, and fishery collapse, which will send ripples throughout the world’s food webs.

Among the alarming impacts of climate change is the spreading range of diseases. Yellow fever, for example, was trapped within the Amazon, but warming temperatures and deforestation have allowed vector mosquitos to spread to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In the U.S., diseases from mosquitos, ticks, and fleas tripled over recent years. Wallace-Wells details an alarming population collapse in the Asian saiga antelope, in which hundreds of thousands died in a few days, likely the result of a benign tonsil bacterium invading the body due to increased humidity. Whether this is an anomaly among that specific animal is unknown.

The social impacts of climate change are already showing their teeth. A “climate caste system,” workers facing heat stress, economic crashes, weakening infrastructure, agricultural declines, refugee crises, mass psychological trauma, and resource wars are on the horizon. It is “a spark igniting a complex bundle of social kindling” (p. 128).

## For Collective Action

While Wallace-Wells’ climate kaleidoscope of cascades and uncertainties is evocative, relentless, and disturbing, his analysis is also frustratingly kaleidoscopic itself. Rather than soberly explain the driving factors of climate change and the lack of global action to combat it, he presents mostly possibilities and uncertainties as to why. In the book’s opening pages, he rattles off thirty psychological reasons preventing action, such as fear, technocratic faith, and an overconsumption of bad news, but fails to stake a claim on which he thinks to be the most important and worth tackling. Instead, he flippantly remarks, “really, who knows why” (p. 9). The kaleidoscope prevents comprehension; Wallace-Wells, to quote himself, appears “mesmerized by the threat directly in front of us without ever perceiving it clearly” (p. 143).

Marxists, however, are clear: the threat comes from modern industrial capitalism. Wallace-Wells admits this is the heart of the problem yet fails to demonstrate how it can be overcome. He correctly rejects individual solutions yet considers everyone complicit.

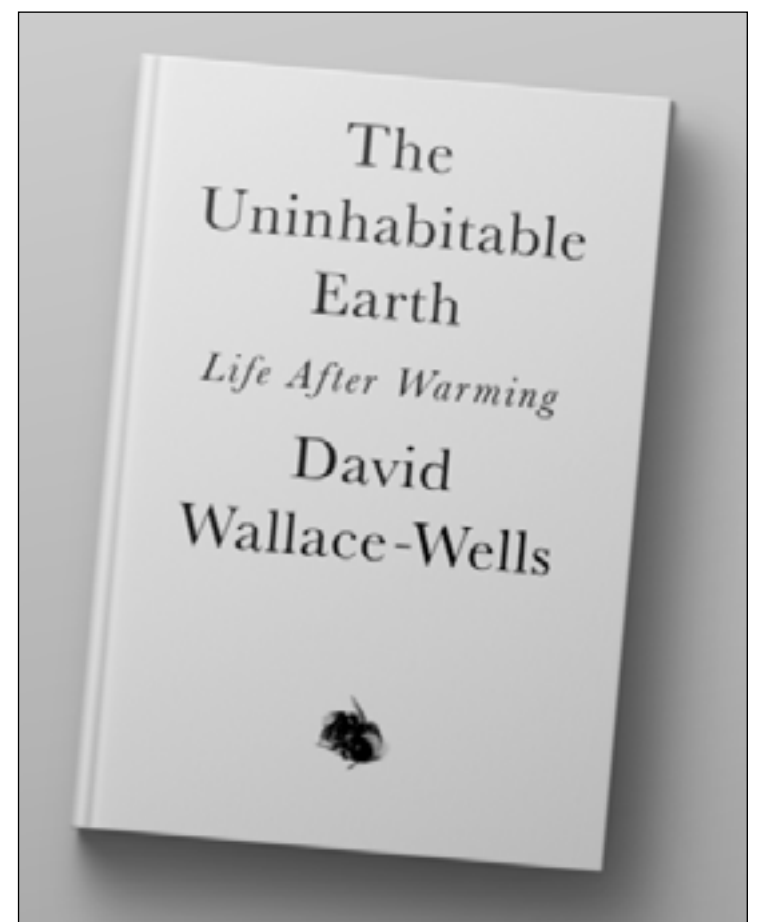
He elaborates upon the problem of “narrativizing” climate change. Who are the heroes and who are the villains? He remarks that the lack of media coverage depicting heroic efforts against climate change is because “collective action is, dramatically, a snore.” (Tell that to Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock, or the teachers on strike!) He claims

that since moral responsibility is distributed throughout a complex network of “stakeholders,” including anyone with a Netflix subscription, there is no clear villain.

Oil companies, through transportation and industry, “make up less than 40% of global emissions,” he feels the need to point out, and although their climate change denial campaigns may be evil, “evilness is not the same as responsibility,” thus we cannot assign them the blame. Considering Republicans as especially responsible is “a form of American narcissism” (p. 149). Shockingly, he claims that assigning responsibility to the richest 10% and capitalism “does not name an antagonist; it names a toxic investment vehicle.”

This is too clever by half. While private and state-owned oil companies may not be directly responsible for most emissions, they lay the foundation of industrial capitalism. Furthermore, that there are other leading emissions sectors, such as industrial agriculture, does not render the fossil fuel industry blameless. This points to the need to bring not just the massive resources of the energy sector into public ownership but also industrial agriculture. The use of these resources which are vital for humanity can then be decided through a democratically agreed plan.

If industrial capitalism is the primary culprit, as Wallace-Wells admits, the heroes and villains are very clear: the world’s working class and oppressed versus the world’s ruling class. Today’s heroes are the Standing Rock Sioux, Greta Thunberg and the 1.4 million students who participated in protests on March 15, and the potential united labor movement; the villains are the 100



corporations and state entities responsible for 71% of emissions since 1988, the banks who finance them, and the politicians who abet them. Rather than a snore, there is a long history of heroic and collective struggle against the forces of capitalism.

Marxism shows the responsibility of capitalism for ecological crisis and how to fight it. Rather than ask “can capitalism survive climate change?” (p. 162), we should ask: can the planet survive capitalism? It is becoming increasingly clear to millions of people, as demonstrated by the popularity of the Green New Deal, that climate change is the logical result of a system driven by profit. Individual working people cannot be blamed for causing this climate crisis, but it is us who have the power to bring it to an end. By fighting collectively for a vastly different society, where workers in polluting industries are re-trained and guaranteed well-paid, green jobs, where the key sectors of the economy are brought into public ownership under democratic control, we can drastically change course. We can build a society that is planned democratically, not for the profit of a tiny minority, but for the needs of all people and of nature. ✪



# Fight Against Sexism and the Right Wing

## Spain Strikes on International Women's Day



**Cora Bergantiños**

This International Women's Day, as in 2018, women in Spain withdrew their labor, stopped the country, and took the streets sending a clear, strong message: the movement for women's rights and gender equality is not going away!

In several countries around the world the traditions of International Women's Day are being revived as working-class women are increasingly radicalized.

The day opened up with quiet and silent classrooms. Over 2.5 million students struck and more than 400,000 took the streets in the numerous morning demonstrations called across the state by the Student Union (led by Izquierda Revolucionaria, our sister organization in the Spanish State and their socialist feminist platform Libres y Combativas). The students were calling for inclusive sex education and an end to sexist violence, among other things.

Later in the evening one million demonstrated in Barcelona and another million in Madrid, hundreds of thousands in Valencia, Bilbo, Sevilla, Granada, Málaga, Gasteiz, A Coruña, Gijón, Valladolid, and many more. A sea of people, many holding posters and

energetically chanting, made it almost impossible to walk through the streets.

At least six million workers across different sectors went on strike. Similar to last year, men organized a network of "points of care" for children and the elderly, offering the infrastructure to facilitate women going on strike. These strikes show the power of working people as a whole. By shutting down the economy for a day, Spanish workers demonstrated that they also have the power to run the economy free from austerity and the attacks of the bosses.

One of the biggest growths of this year's International Women's Day (IWD) was in rural areas and smaller cities. In Almeria, for example, the agrarian organization COAG and the Confederation of Women in the rural areas estimates that 80% of farmer and rancher women struck.

The day of protests was organized by the 8M Commission (for March 8) a coalition of more than a hundred different organizations. There was an average of 250 feminists participating in the commission and there were more than 600 meetings that the 8M Commission held across the country. Over 200 shop stewards' committees also joined the coalition and played a crucial role demanding more support from the main trade unions.



Protestors sit behind the Libres y Combativas banner at the March 8 demonstration in Barcelona.

While both Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT, General Union of Workers) and Comisiones Obreras (CCOO, Workers Commissions) only called for a two-hour strike, this year they offered support for the locals that wanted to call for the full 24-hour strike. Going further, in the education sector – one in which women are the majority of the workforce – CCOO called for the full 24-hour strike and achieved a stunning success: 80% participation in universities, 61% in high schools and 42.4% in pre-schools. Despite this progressive step, more involvement is needed from the main trade unions to stop the advancement of the

right-wing, particularly as we go to elections in April and May.

For the second year in a row, IWD in Spain has been a day of struggle, demonstrating that the engine for real change in society are working people organized collectively to fight back. The oppression of women cannot be resolved on the basis of capitalism, a system that needs divisions to function.

As Izquierda Revolucionaria put it "we must build a feminism that is separate from the shows of the system, that they cannot assimilate or domesticate: a revolutionary, anticapitalist and class feminism." ☪

## Youth Strike for Climate

**Grace Fors**

On Friday, March 15, over 1.4 million outraged youth took to the streets all over the world including in the U.S. They have taken a stand against the system's utter failure to address the climate crisis.

This international day of action provided a glimpse of the vibrant grassroots movement emerging around the issue of climate change. Contingents of students left their classrooms and descended on city squares and government buildings demanding immediate action. Headlines showed children and teenagers joining massive demonstrations, packed with homemade signs, displaying the energy and creative power of the youth!

These strikes are first and foremost a call to action. Across all 125 countries that saw demonstrations, young people are firmly demanding aggressive government action to match the scale of the ecological devastation.

### Seize the Momentum

With the wave of teachers strikes breathing new life into the labor movement, schools are an ideal forum for agitation. If students continue to build support among their peers, parents, and teachers, they can put forward

a bold appeal for broader forces to join them in the streets!

In Belgium, the persistent student strikes have built growing support among the union rank and file. Multiple government buildings and city halls across the country were closed on March 15 as public sector unions joined the strike. It is when the organized working class boldly takes up this struggle that we will see real change.

### No More Patience

All over the world, politicians have shown their indifference to the millions of lives at stake. That is why we must prepare to step in ourselves, by building a mass movement that can wrest power from their hands.

Capitalism is a fundamentally irresponsible system that feeds on exploitation in its drive to extract profits. Since its very beginnings, it has preyed on human misery and the natural environment to advance the interests of the few. Only a transition to a planned economy can hope to resolve these fundamental contradictions. This rotten system is holding back human progress on countless fronts. The fight for our future on Earth demands a full-scale struggle against capitalism's quest for destruction! ☪

## Bold Resurgence in the Mexican Labor Movement

**Hannah Swoboda**

On January 24, forty-five factories in Matamoros, Mexico, a city in the "maquiladora" free trade zone near the border with Texas, went on strike, with over 30,000 workers demanding 20% wage increases, an increase in their productivity bonuses from 3,500 pesos yearly to 32,000 pesos, protection of their benefits, and the democratization of their union. The workers have won their demands in the majority of these cases. As we go to press there are still five factories on strike.

The catalyst for these strikes has been the promise by the new left populist Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) to raise the minimum wage in the border region of the country, to which corporations responded with job cuts, the elimination of bonuses and benefits, the denial of obligatory annual pay raises, and various other maneuvers to avoid actually raising the real wages of their employees.

These strikes are significant due to their break with the typical corrupt dealings between the leadership of big unions and employers in Mexico, who often collaborate at the expense of workers. The workers in Matamoros are part of the

Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), the largest union federation in the country, whose leadership unfortunately regularly caves to company demands in the workers' contract negotiations.

Rather than resigning themselves to the concessionary stance of the federation leadership, the workers – using their own independent networks to communicate – instead took determined action and forced the hands of their union leaders to announce their strike as official. Through the process of the workers' independent organizing, debates have also begun within the union's ranks about replacing union leaders who do not defend the interests of the working class, requiring that union leaders earn the salary of an average worker, and of the need for truly democratic union elections.

The election and promises of AMLO have given confidence to Mexican workers who have taken matters into their own hands. Emboldened by the victories in Matamoros, workers in Sonora, Chihuahua, and Baja California have moved into action as well. These strikes have the potential to continue to spread across the country, as we have seen with the continuing wave of teachers' strikes in the U.S. ☪



# Philly DA Krasner Challenges Mumia Abu-Jamal's Appeal

**Eric Jenkins**

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner's recent decision to appeal Judge Leon Tucker's decision to allow Mumia Abu-Jamal to reargue an appeal has turned some of Krasner's most ardent supporters into some of his most vocal critics.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, former Black Panther and radical journalist, was convicted and sentenced to death for the 1981 fatal shooting of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner. Mumia Abu-Jamal's initial trial and the long appeals process have been found to be seriously compromised. It was the finding that the original jury had been improperly instructed in the penalty phase which caused Judge Yohn to vacate Abu-Jamal's death sentence in 2001. The current appeal is based on the potential conflict in the role of Ron Castille as both a DA and PA Supreme Court justice during the appeals process.

Before his election in 2017 as Philadelphia's District Attorney, Larry Krasner had established a reputation not as a prosecutor, but as a progressive defense attorney, suing the Philadelphia Police Department 75 times. In January, Krasner turned over six boxes of

previously unknown documents unearthed in a closet to Abu-Jamal's legal team. However, Judge Leon Tucker's ruling which allowing the appeal to go forward limited consideration to evidence which had previously been presented, presumably excluding this new material.

Socialist Alternative continues to fully support Abu-Jamal's right to a new trial based on all the evidence. But we would go further and say it is long overdue for Mumia to be released. He has spent 38 years in prison, most of them on death row, after being railroaded by reactionary forces. Thousands of prisoners also share the right to a new trial – all those whose path to even the imperfect justice available under capitalism has been obstructed by institutional racism, police corruption and incompetence, coercive plea bargaining and every other manipulation by those with power and money over those who do not.

We call on Larry Krasner to boldly apply the full power of his office to rebalance the scales of justice, particularly for those most affected, the thousands of working class people of color in prison and their families. Further, he must use the bully pulpit that



*Mumia Abu-Jamal has been in jail since 1981.*

comes with elected office to build the movements that could force changes to the law.

Far too many Americans are in prison, on probation or on parole for non-violent offenses, the inability to post bail or pay fines and technical violations of rules designed

to return them to jail. Thoroughgoing justice reform will require millions of working class people becoming politically involved to change not only the individuals filling the seats of power, but also the whole damn guilty system of capitalism. ✪

## Anti-Semitism Campaign Targets the Left

*continued from p. 3*

Israel." Tight U.S. support for Israel is not a result casting a spell, but of the real interests of imperialism in this critical region. Without understating the role of AIPAC, it is not the determining factor in the overall policy of the U.S.

It is true that politicians are regularly bought and sold by lobby money, but we need to be more clear about whose interests are being served. The whole policy of the U.S. toward the Israeli state has been based on advancing the financial interests of U.S. companies in the Middle East and not on "caring" for the security of the Israeli people.

A strong Israeli garrison allowed the U.S. to protect its oil interests and defend against Soviet influence in the region during the Cold War. The U.S. capitalist class and its hired politicians couldn't care less about the safety of Israeli citizens or about the alleged defense of democracy in the Middle East.

### Divisions within Israeli Politics

It is an injustice that these attacks hide the debates in Israeli society and the fact that criticism over government policy is commonplace in such a politically divided

country. Instead, Israeli-government supporters abroad are painting a fake picture of Israeli unity around the horrific policies of the Netanyahu government.

In reality, significant sections of Israeli society are fierce opponents of Netanyahu and his pro-capitalist and right-wing agenda.

Unfortunately, some sections of the U.S. left who stand against the brutality of the Israeli regime toward the Palestinian people paint the entire Israeli society as one unified bloc of reaction. These leftists also downplay the potential role or even the existence of the Israeli working class.

This approach misses the real political divisions within Israeli society – class divisions. Fighting the right-wing Netanyahu government is first and foremost the task of the Israeli and Palestinian working class. The large joint Jewish-Palestinian protests against the racist Nationality Law show only a glimpse of what is possible.

Treating Israelis as a homogenous bloc, in reality, aids the right-wing in accusing the left of anti-Semitism. A real fight to an end to Israeli brutality and occupation would require winning over working-class Israelis into a united fight against the government of the

bosses. The deep history of class struggle in Israel shows that this is not only a possibility, but in fact the only solution.

To be clear, Omar does not echo this approach but neither does she or the other left representatives in Congress point to how a real struggle based on mass working-class action could unite Israeli and Palestinian working-class people against the right-wing regime and build international working-class solidarity abroad.

### Who's the Real Anti-Semite?

Trump's presidential victory has given the real anti-Semites and far-right fascist groups in the U.S. a new confidence that they have lacked for years. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), anti-Semitic activity increased 35% in 2016 and another 57% in 2017.

The era of Trump has elevated the Christian right whose support for Israel is partly based on the belief in the prophecy of a coming war that will usher in "the end of times" in which all non-believers – including all Jews – will die while the real believers will ascend to heaven. Trump promotes this fanaticism

while shouting about "anti-Semitism."

Anti-Semitism has historically based itself on the right-wing of the political map. But the fiercest fighters against anti-Semitism and any kind of oppression have always come from the left, particularly the ranks of organized labor and socialist organizations.

It was the socialist revolution of Russia in 1917 that banned anti-Semitism and actively fought to create a truly equal society. It was unions and socialist organizers in Europe who stood until their last breath against fascist reaction. In a response to the pro-Nazi German American Bund's 20,000 rally in New York's Madison Square Garden in 1939, the Trotskyist Socialist Workers' Party organized 50,000 in counter-protest. And today, it is the role of organized workers and socialists to stand firm against any type of racism and oppression as well as to defend freedom of speech.

The fight against anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of oppression is tied to the fight against capitalism. Socialist Alternative stands for the eradication of racism, for the freedom to criticize, and for a socialist society, where all types of oppressions are thrown in the trash bin of history. ✪



# Workers Fight Amazon's Anti-Family Policies

**Rob Jenkins**

Over the last couple of years, public anger against Amazon and Jeff Bezos has intensified. In Seattle, this most clearly manifested itself in the uproar that followed Amazon pressuring the Democratic members of the city council to repeal the modest tax on the largest corporations in the city passed last year. Residents were furious that one of the richest corporations in the history of the world refused to pay even a very small share toward helping resolve the homelessness crisis in Seattle. And once again, Amazon paid no federal taxes for 2018.

In New York, activists were recently able to build a successful fight back against the planned "HQ2" and \$3 billion subsidy that Andrew Cuomo and Bill de Blasio wanted to give Amazon. Those plans have now been canceled.

In Minneapolis and in Europe, small groups of Amazon workers organized and were able to successfully force Amazon to the bargaining table over a handful of issues.

Now, a new group of workers within Amazon are trying to build a fight back of their own.

The Momazonians are a group of 1,800 mothers working at Amazon who have started to organize against the family-unfriendly working conditions. Tech companies in general have an incredibly poor reputation when it comes to "work-life balance" and helping working parents, but Amazon is particularly

egregious.

According to workers at Amazon, they are expected to work long hours, and many have seen themselves marginalized and their careers derailed when they have children. Many parents at Amazon say they feel like they must hide the fact that they have children, because they fear being sidelined and ignored by their bosses.

For the time being, the Momazonians have decided to focus their efforts on fighting for one key demand: employer-provided daycare. This would allow working parents to access onsite daycare or at-home child care for sick children. The costs of child care are a general issue that seriously affects all working-class families and a broader fight is needed.

So far the Momazonian's strategy has been limited to lobbying management for a meeting to discuss the daycare proposal. To truly become a force that pushes for change within the company, the Momazonians should take their campaign public to bring the abuses of Amazon out into the open. The only way to win serious gains at Amazon and protect people who demand improvements from company retaliation is to unionize the whole workforce.



If the Momazonians could link up other Amazon workers – tech workers and "fulfillment center" warehouse workers – they could form a powerful coalition to fight for the rights and working conditions of all Amazon employees. The potential power of all these workers to disrupt Amazon's operations through various types of work actions would force management to the bargaining table.

Workers from all walks of life have to deal with a system which subordinates the needs of working-class parents and their children to the demand for more profit for the ruling class.

An Amazon-wide union would be a huge step forward. It could join up with other unions and working people across industries to fight for the reforms we desperately need, including universal child care and mandatory paid parental leave for all workers in America. ☘

## Interview with a UFCW Member

# Stop and Shop Poised to Strike in New England

**Alex Wikstrom** works at Stop and Shop in Arlington, MA and is a member of UFCW 1445. He is a member of the Cambridge/Somerville branch of Socialist Alternative.

### Why are Stop and Shop workers ready to strike?

31,000 Stop and Shop workers across Southern New England, represented by 5 different union locals, have authorized strikes. Our contract is up and the company is trying to take away our benefits. They are trying to take away our time-and-half Sunday and holiday pay, cap our wages to just \$18.50 no matter your tenure with the company, take away a week of vacation from people who have worked here for five years, and take away our pension, forcing us to take a 401k instead. At Stop and Shop a lot of us need the extra pay from the time-and-half and those who have been working at the company for a long time will be screwed out of the extra week they are owed and the retirement they have paid into

along with getting their pay cut.

### What role has the union played in this struggle?

My union is UFCW Local 1445. The union has played an important role in this struggle. When a person starts working at Stop and Shop they automatically join the union, so from the beginning we have an organization uniting us.

On a day to day basis, the shop stewards keep us informed with the goings on within the union and what is happening with the company. They are our voice when dealing with the company.

For this possible strike, the shop stewards are all enthusiastically on board and are organizing. The membership also voted on whether to strike or not and it passed unanimously so we could go out really any day now.

### What is needed for victory?

What I would say we need to win this fight



is to just strike. The union needs to stop fearing the idea of a strike and pull the trigger. My coworkers are ready to strike; they want to keep their benefits. These cuts affect every worker from long time fulltime to part timers who just joined. We can win if the union puts their faith into the workers. But if they don't it will be like every other time the contract has run out and it will be disappointing and frustrating to a lot of us. In the past the union would call for a vote on a strike and then never carry it out. Many of us do not want that to happen again, especially given what is under threat in this new contract. We are ready to fight and we can't win if we don't fight back! ☘

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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EDITOR: Tom Crean

EDITORIAL BOARD:

George Brown, Eljeer Hawkins,  
Joshua Koritz, Keely Mullen,  
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Tony Wilsdon

✉ Editors@SocialistAlternative.org

## NATIONAL

639 Union Street, Basement  
Brooklyn, NY 11215

info@SocialistAlternative.org  
facebook.com/SocialistAlternativeUSA  
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## IN YOUR AREA

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CANADA ..... (604) 738-1653  
contact@socialistalternative.ca  
www.socialistalternative.ca  
MEXICO ..... izquierda.revolucionaria.mx@gmail.com  
www.izquierdarevolucionariamx.net  
QUÉBEC ..... info@AlternativeSocialiste.org  
www.AlternativeSocialiste.org



# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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## Mueller Report Underlines Democrats' Weakness

# MOVEMENT NEEDED TO DEFEAT TRUMP

**Tom Crean**

As we go to press, the long-awaited key findings of Robert Mueller's investigation into Trump's ties to Russia have been made public. Mueller found no clear evidence of Trump and his 2016 presidential campaign "colluding" with Vladimir Putin. As regards Trump "obstructing justice," Mueller says there is no conclusive evidence but does not exonerate him either.

Trump and his associates are claiming victory, saying he has been "fully exonerated." It is very clear that the "Russia, Russia, Russia" narrative that the Democratic leadership and the liberal media endlessly promoted for two years has hit the wall. Even leaving aside the very thin evidence of "collusion," we have consistently pointed to the absurdity of the idea that a Russian intelligence operation was the decisive factor in the outcome of the 2016 elections. The Democratic leadership has spent two years demobilizing the movement against Trump by telling people to just wait until the Mueller report concludes.

This of course is not the end of Trump's legal problems as other investigations continue into his finances, his hush money payments to Stormy Daniels, etc. Also the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives is set to conduct extensive public hearings on all these issues, ensuring that the saga will continue indefinitely. But as they already have largely taken impeachment off the table, the Mueller report looks set to end any chance the Democrats will actually seek to bring Trump down.

The Democratic establishment has chosen to focus on completely secondary issues rather than mobilize working people and the oppressed on the issues they care about against this vicious regime.

### The Real Crimes

Here is a list (by no means complete) of Trump's actual "high crimes and misdemeanors":

- ⊕ Threatening the health care of millions of people especially those near or below the poverty line. He and the Congressional Republicans have worked overtime to roll back the expansion of Medicaid. And despite repeatedly promising not to cut Medicare and Social Security in 2016 this is exactly what his new budget proposes to do. Meanwhile he and his billionaire cabinet have promoted massive tax cuts for big business and the rich.
- ⊕ He has given the Christian Right everything they've asked for. In particular he has put two reactionaries on the Supreme Court who will attack voting rights, LGBTQ rights and especially *Roe v. Wade*, with abortion rights already severely under attack at the state level.
- ⊕ Emboldening white nationalists and actively stoking racial division. This contributed directly to the Charlottesville neo-Nazi mobilization in 2017 and to the Pittsburgh anti-Semitic massacre in 2018.
- ⊕ Promoting attacks on union rights, including last year's *Janus* Supreme Court decisions. Though it's clear that a

strong labor movement is the only effective way to push back against the massive increase in inequality.

- ⊕ Finally, but by no means least important, instead of acting to avert climate catastrophe, Trump pulled out of the limited Paris accord and has sought to rip up all Obama-era regulations that curbed pollution or sought to reduce carbon emissions. Like Nero, he dances while the planet burns.

### What Is To Be Done?

No other president since World War II has had disapproval ratings over 50% virtually since the day he took office. How is it that the Democratic establishment are managing to let this outright reactionary whose policies were again rejected by a clear majority in the midterms off the hook? It's not just their focus on Mueller's investigation as "the way" to harm Trump. The Democrats also failed to take advantage of the government shutdown which led to Trump's highest disapproval ratings by not challenging his narrative of an "invasion" at the southern border and refusing to mobilize ordinary people in the streets. The corporate media sought to give Nancy Pelosi credit for bringing the shutdown to an end. But it was actually the action of air traffic controllers and flight attendants which threatened to lead to a full scale shutdown of the airports which brought Trump to heel within hours.

The bottom line is that the Democrats, even if they formally oppose reactionary policies, refuse to mobilize ordinary people to

fight back. The establishment also resists any significant reforms that would affect the corporate bottom line.

They answer to their corporate donors who completely oppose Medicare for All and the Green New Deal; proposals that have been popularized by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and are enormously popular in the voting base of the party.

The outcome of the Mueller investigation was largely predictable. But it urgently poses the question: how are we going to fight back against the endless attacks by the right?

In the past year young people have shown the way in the mass student walkouts demanding action on gun violence and climate change. Women have shown the way in the resistance to Kavanaugh. But most significant is the teachers revolt. By fighting alongside working class communities and reclaiming the strike weapon they have won significant gains from West Virginia to Oakland. They are showing the way to build the type of sustained mass movement we need.

This movement also needs a political expression, which is why we need a new party that fights for the interests of working people not the billionaires. We support Bernie Sanders campaign for president because its program points in this direction despite the campaign being stuck inside the Democratic Party. This is why the ruling class would rather Trump win again than let Bernie near the White House. At this moment it's critical that Bernie and AOC give real leadership and call for mass mobilizations and escalating action against this dangerous regime. ⊕