

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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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, health care, 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



Chris Rice

Chicago, IL

In January of 2017 I was sulking around my college campus because Trump had become president and I didn't get a chance to vote for the candidate who spoke to me most, Bernie Sanders. Outside the library two students had set up a table full of buttons, papers, and literature with a canvas banner reading Socialist Students. They were telling students entering the library that they needed to get into the streets for a rally, get organized, and stand against the right-wing agenda of Trump. It was exactly what I needed to hear and it drew me to the table.

I knew who Kshama Sawant was but I wasn't entirely sure what the differences were between Socialist Alternative and other left groups. After Occupy Wall Street I had a lot of interests in socialist ideas and went to several public meetings of other groups. I left these meetings with lots of questions. What did they mean by socialism? How can we change things? I had a hard time getting answers from the organizers who talked to me afterwards. This was not my experience meeting up with the people I had talked to at Socialist Alternative's table. They patiently explained their position and didn't look down on me for not knowing the things they already knew. It felt like I had found a group of people who were serious about transforming society.

Socialist Alternative has played a major role in passing a \$15 dollar minimum wage in two major cities, one of the demands that had

drawn me to Bernie Sanders. They did this by building a movement and putting pressure on the people in power. Today we fight for rent control, Medicare for All, and the Green New Deal with the same bottom up pressure.

I've learned much more in my time as a member of Socialist Alternative than I ever did as a cynical online leftist. When you are alone at your computer the task of standing up to the corporations, billionaires, and entrenched political powers looks daunting and it's easy to become disillusioned. Through weekly political discussion, tabling, and engaging in politics, both locally and nationally, I have gained confidence in the power of working-class people to stand up to the ruling class and change society. ✦

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The first issue of Socialist Alternative's new journal *Socialist World* is coming out! It will be produced three times a year alongside our newspaper which is published 10 times a year. In this journal we will make the case for Marxism in the 21st century. It will also be thoroughly internationalist, carrying material from our co-thinkers in the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) around the world. Subscribe to our publications today!



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Fightback Needed to Defeat the Right!

Brutal Abortion Bans Passed

Keely Mullen

In late May, the Republican-controlled Alabama Legislature passed, and the governor signed, a near complete ban on abortion. This is now the most restrictive state law on abortion in the country since the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision in 1973.

This Alabama bill makes abortion illegal at any stage of pregnancy except when the life of the mother is at risk and threatens abortion providers with 99 years in prison. This is just one in a spate of recent state laws which are apparently trying to outdo one another in their barbarism. So-called “heartbeat” bills have been passed in Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia, and Ohio which ban abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected (usually at 6-8 weeks) which is often before the mother even knows she is pregnant.

The Alabama ban, as well as similar bills in the works in other states, directly challenge federal law – which is exactly the intent. The clear goal of the Christian right in pushing these bills is to create pressure on the Supreme Court’s conservative majority to strike down *Roe v. Wade*.

Divisions on the Right

There are, however, real divisions within the Republican Party on these bills – especially the Alabama bill – and in reality they represent an overreach by hard-liners on the right. Only 14% of Americans support an extreme law like the one in Alabama and two-thirds of Americans oppose rolling back *Roe v. Wade*. If the Republican Party were to line up behind these extreme abortion bans it would undermine their chances to keep the White House and retake the House of Representatives in 2020. It is for this reason that the chair of the Republican National Committee publicly said she’s opposed to the Alabama law and popular right-wing talking heads like Tomi Lahren have also come out against it for being too restrictive.



Protesters dressed as handmaidens at the Alabama State House

The Alabama legislation will very likely be struck down in federal court. The Supreme Court is more likely in the next period to take up bills that restrict abortion rather than outlaw it completely. But there is no room for complacency. *Roe v. Wade* which was the single most important gain of the women’s movement of the 60s and 70s is in more danger than at any point since 1973. When the Supreme Court does actually hear a case with the potential to effectively overturn these gains there will be mass outrage. Of course, what was won in the 60s and 70s has already been slowly eroded by state laws limiting certain abortion practices, penalizing abortion providers, etc. To win this historic fight to hold on to – and expand – the gains of *Roe v. Wade* we must begin building the movement now to defend and extend abortion rights.

Fightback Needed

There has been a growing fightback by women in the U.S. in the past five years. Women have participated in demonstrations

against Trump in enormous numbers. There has been a huge politicization around the issue of sexual harassment thanks to #MeToo.

While there is broad anger about the anti-women legislation in Alabama, Georgia, and other states, and real fear about their implications, we have not yet seen mass protests against them. There have been small rallies throughout the country, but not much else. Unfortunately, responsibility for this lies primarily at the feet of the major women’s organizations like NOW, NARAL, and Planned Parenthood who, despite their significant profile, have not made serious efforts to launch a coordinated fightback.

The Democratic Party leadership has played an abysmal role in protecting abortion rights. Nancy Pelosi has said that Democrats do not have to “toe the party line” on abortion. Some Democrats have clearly taken this free pass to heart. Louisiana Democratic Party Governor John Bel Edwards is prepared to sign a fetal heartbeat bill into law any day now. This shows the need for a new party that will unapologetically and consistently fight for

women’s rights.

In the absence of fighting leadership coming from the traditional women’s organizations or the Democratic Party establishment, new forces will need to step forward to help lead a fightback – potentially leading to the creation of new women’s organizations. Lessons should also be drawn from the historic victories on abortion rights internationally in recent years especially in the repeal of anti-abortion laws in Ireland that were just as horrific as the Alabama law.

Women have not only been at the center of the fight back against Trump, but have crucially made up a large part of recent strikes of teachers, nurses, and hotel workers. The unions should join the struggle for free, legal, and safe abortion on demand as part of a broader fight for free health care. Bernie Sanders has said that his Medicare for All proposal would include full, free reproductive care which would be a tremendous step forward. The unions can use their substantial social weight to fight alongside women’s organization for this demand as well as demands for free, universal childcare and paid parental leave to give working families real choice. Being forced to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term can have devastating consequences for poor and working class women, making the role of the organized working class essential in this struggle.

There’s no question that a new women’s movement is emerging and these recent attacks can serve as inspiration for that movement to organize itself and develop a new, fighting leadership. While these new laws will almost certainly be struck down, decisive threats to *Roe v. Wade* are on the horizon and we need to rapidly build the forces now to defeat those attacks when they come. Socialist Alternative is fighting to build the socialist feminist wing of the women’s movement which orients to working class women and points to the interconnection of the struggle for women’s liberation and ending capitalism. ☺

U.S.-China Trade War Escalates

Read more at www.SocialistAlternative.org

Vincent Kolo
chinaworker.info

President Trump’s “bombshell” decision to increase punitive tariffs against China one minute past midnight on Friday May 10, marks a dramatic escalation of the 10-month-old trade war between the world’s biggest economies.

The U.S. tariffs are raised to 25% from 10%, the level set last September, on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports. Trump has also threatened to up the ante by extending tariffs to the remaining \$325 billion of Chinese imports – taxing everything.

The Chinese regime vowed to take new

as yet unspecified countermeasures. The scale and form of these countermeasures will give an indication whether Beijing believes the negotiations that restarted last December have irrevocably collapsed or that Trump’s tariff hike is a tactic to speed up the talks.

China sells almost four times as much to the U.S. than it buys in return and therefore any tariff war between the two countries is “asymmetrical,” increasing the possibility that China could retaliate in other ways – through depreciation of its currency or taking measures against U.S. companies operating in China – although at this stage neither of these options is likely.

The escalation of the conflict has sent jitters through global financial markets, hitting stocks, currencies and commodity prices.

The U.S. and China are playing “Russian roulette with the world economy” protested the president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce speaking in China. The real losers, rather than the capitalists who are complaining about reduced profits, are workers and consumers in the U.S., China, and worldwide whose jobs and living standards are at stake.

Today’s political and diplomatic uncertainty, not to say chaos, with global trading rules and capitalist international

institutions weakened and increasingly sidelined, is indicative of a global system in decay. Capitalist nationalism, of which both Trump and Xi are exponents, is no more of a solution than the globalized capitalism favoured by the main wing of the capitalist class internationally for more than three decades. Likewise, both U.S.-style “free market” capitalism and China’s authoritarian capitalism represent two variants of a decaying economic system. The working class is the only force, drawing behind it all the oppressed, which can put an end to this chaotic state of affairs, by fighting for international socialism and democratic planning. ☺

Kshama Sawant Reelection Campaign



Rent Control Fight Heats Up in Seattle

Emily McArthur

On a sunny Saturday in Seattle, dozens of volunteers with Councilmember Kshama Sawant's re-election campaign spread across the city asking: "Do you support rent control?" Many people began to walk by, then stop, spin on their heel to come back and ask, "did you say rent control?!" In just a few weeks, thousands have signed on to support the re-election campaign.

Countless stories of rent hikes that drive families out of the city, of affordable apartments being torn down to make way for luxury units, and of 1 in 13 Seattle Public Schools students experiencing homelessness have begun to coalesce into a fighting energy determined to win real relief for working families.

The Chateau Apartments is a rare affordable building in Seattle's Central District where residents range from a ninety-year-old Chinese couple to a family of five who only just moved in after living out of their car. When the Chateau residents first heard that their building was going to be torn down by Cadence Real Estate, a developer that brags about its ability to make a 27% profit for its investors, tenants got organized. They partnered with Councilmember Sawant's office to fight back and win major concessions, including \$200,000 in relocation assistance. The residents have now joined the broader community fight for rent control.

The excitement around rent control is gaining steam nationwide. In New York City, a showdown between tenants and developers is shaping up over universal rent control, which is aimed at closing the massive corporate loopholes in existing tenant protections. In Colorado, California, and Oregon, statewide bans are being challenged by growing tenants' movements. Oregon tenants already won an important breakthrough with a new

statewide rent control law, though the landlord lobby won major loopholes.

The Case for Universal Rent Control

There is a growing recognition that the private market isn't capable of solving the housing crisis. Seattle is on a building spree, with more cranes than any other American city for four years running. But 92% of all new housing is luxury housing that's out of reach for most residents, while some neighborhoods have 27% vacancy rates!

The market's failure has fueled fast-rising support for rent control in Seattle, but when our volunteers talk to people in the street it's also clear that years of developer and landlord propaganda have sowed confusion. Capitalist economists and politicians continue to allege it leads to less housing being built which in turn drives up housing prices. But in New York and San Francisco, it wasn't rent control itself but the massive loopholes and exemptions won by developer lobbyists that created a shortage of affordable units.

To address these failures, Kshama Sawant has introduced a universal rent control bill to the Seattle City Council that would be universally applied. It avoids exemptions for new construction and "vacancy decontrol" which allows landlords to raise the rent as high as they want when a renter moves out, which leads to tenants enduring harassment campaigns from landlords trying to drive them out.

Rent control alone won't be enough to solve the housing affordability crisis. Councilmember Sawant has also fought to build tens of thousands of new, publicly owned affordable homes, paid for by taxing Amazon and big business. Even if we win these demands, big victories will always be under attack under

capitalism, which is we we fight for a fundamentally different society: we fight for socialism, where working people's needs are prioritized, not corporate profits.

How Do We Win?

While the growing demand for bold answers to the housing crisis has led some politicians to claim they support rent control, their strategy of backroom meetings with corporate stakeholders and developer-funded state officials will never be the path to victory. We need to build a determined movement of working people who are ready to fight. With a statewide ban, and the Washington State legislature in the hands of Democrats who refuse to act on rent control because of their ties to the real estate lobby, a movement in Seattle must be the tip of the spear for our fighting statewide strategy.

Escalating action by tenant groups, socialist and community organizations – and crucially the labor movement – will all be needed to build a strong enough movement to win. Already a number of renters rights groups and the Seattle teachers union are backing Sawant's legislation.

A major victory for rent control in one city could serve as a breakthrough for affordable housing movements around the country. Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant, who has been the leading voice for rent control in Seattle since she was first elected to City Council in 2013, is using her reelection campaign to build support for universal rent control. If passed, her bill would be the strongest in the country.

Support, endorsements, and donations to Kshama's campaign help to build a movement for rent control that can spread nationwide. Will you join the movement today? ☘

Jeff Bezos Wants to Buy Seattle City Council

Ty Moore

The business-backed campaign to defeat Kshama Sawant is likely to make this City Council race the most expensive in Seattle history (the 2015 campaign to unseat Sawant set the previous record!). Three months before the August primary, which will select the top two candidates to face-off in the November election, the Chamber of Commerce PAC has already amassed over \$700,000.

Amazon alone donated \$200,000 to the Chamber's war chest, with more likely to follow, according to a Seattle Times feature titled "Seattle's Business Lobby Sees Opportunity to Unseat the City Council's Progressive Majority." This comes one year after Jeff Bezos shut down construction on a new skyscraper to economically blackmail City Council to block the "Amazon Tax," which was passed unanimously following a grassroots campaign led by Sawant, Socialist Alternative, and a wider Housing for All coalition.

Yet under continued pressure from Amazon, the tax was repealed just a month later. Sawant was one of just two councilmembers to vote against the Amazon Tax repeal, a reversal orchestrated by Mayor Jenny Durkan whose 2017 election victory was bought with \$350,000 from Amazon.

Reflecting the growing anger at Jeff Bezos' role in Seattle politics, a recent statement by 21 "concerned members of the Democratic Party's 37th Legislative District" protested "the aggressive plans of Jeff Bezos and the Chamber of Commerce to unseat Kshama Sawant... and the Chamber's attempts to buy this election. As Kshama has emphasized from the beginning, what's at stake in this election is who runs Seattle - Amazon and big business, or working people."

A few days later, Sawant "score[d] a 'no consensus' victory in the 37th" Democrats, as the Capitol Hill blog put it, in a contentious vote at their 150-strong meeting (because Kshama is not a Democratic Party member, their rules preclude an endorsement).

Calling for comprehensive rent control and taxing big business to fund a massive expansion of publicly owned social housing, Sawant's reelection campaign is gaining momentum. However, business remembers how Sawant's previous election victories spurred on successful movements to win a \$15 an hour minimum wage in 2014 and landmark renters rights legislation in 2016, among other gains. Their fear of a new powerful movements for rent control and taxing the rich is motivating them to go all-out to defeat Kshama. ☘



Councilmember Kshama Sawant marches in a Tax Amazon demonstration with other members of Socialist Alternative.

Democratic Establishment Pushes Biden for 2020

Failed Strategy to Defeat Trump

Nick Wozniak

In a historically large field of 23 candidates, the Democratic establishment has already made clear that Joe Biden is their current preferred nominee to take on Donald Trump in 2020. His campaign has received more TV coverage than all the other Democratic candidates combined and he has drawn favorable mentions from establishment leaders. The Democratic Party's network of big business and wealthy donors have also begun to coordinate fundraising. Biden spent his first night as a candidate raising money with a top Comcast executive and Democrat Party cash bundler. He has not yet achieved the elite consensus that existed around Hillary Clinton in 2015, but at this early stage it's clear he's the establishment's pick to beat not only Trump, but also Bernie Sanders in the primary who they view as a lethal threat.

Biden argues that his experience uniquely positions him to defeat Trump, "unite the nation," and end divisiveness in politics. His support is currently based on his appeal to nostalgia for the pre-Trump Obama years. This will be a very effective tool for him throughout his campaign. Despite this, Bernie Sanders' grassroots campaign is not far behind in many polls. Instead of making misguided appeals to Democratic Party unity, Bernie Sanders will need to expose Biden's abysmal record in fighting for working people. The primary election will revolve around the question: "What's the best strategy to defeat Trump?"

Biden is No Answer to Trump

The experience of the 2016 Democratic primary will be highly instructive in the lead up to 2020. Hillary Clinton's failure to defeat Trump should be a warning for Americans who

are looking to the political "middle ground" as the best chance to get rid of Trump. Trump was able to win by posing himself as an anti-establishment candidate against Clinton's long record of harmful pro-business and pro-war policies, all the while whipping up racism and xenophobia to distract from his own straightforwardly pro-billionaire politics.

Yet with Biden, the Democratic Party will be committing to a dangerous rerun of the 2016 strategy. Throughout his political tenure, he has consistently come down on the side of the super rich rather than working-class people. In the 1990s, Biden was one of the crucial votes that led to the passage of NAFTA, the devastating free-trade agreement that decimated hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. He was a key architect of the War on Drugs and mass incarceration policies, like the 1994 crime bill, that devastated the black working class in the '80s and '90s. After 9/11, he was an author of the notoriously xenophobic "Patriot Act" and a cheerleader for the Iraq War. Not to mention the vile role he played in the controversy surrounding Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill. Despite his recent pandering to working-class voters, this is just a sampling of Biden's true pro-corporate, pro-war, anti-working people political legacy.

Unity of Working People Needed to Defeat Trumpism

It is of course not ruled out that the depth of anger at Trump could propel Biden to victory in a general election, but a Biden presidency would mean a repetition of the same neo-liberal, pro-corporate policies that allowed Trump to rise in the first place. Defeating Trump in an election does not necessarily mean defeating Trumpism. In fact, ousting Trump with someone like Biden can



almost guarantee a figure worse than Trump emerges in the future. Defeating Trumpism long term would require an unapologetically pro-working class political approach.

The political figure best positioned at the moment to provide a progressive alternative to establishment figures like Biden is Bernie Sanders. His left-populist program and emphasis on demands that can unite broad sections of the American working class – Medicare for All, a Green New Deal, billions in spending on infrastructure renewal – point in the direction of how Trumpism can be defeated. His recent emphasis on mobilizing his supporters to join active picket lines is especially welcomed as it demonstrates the crucial importance of uniting working class people in struggle.

However, as we've written in our material about the Green New Deal, if we are to truly

address the growing poverty and inequality in the United States as well as the impending climate crisis, it will require going much further than even Bernie Sanders is willing to go. It will require taking the key sectors of the economy, like the energy companies and the banks, into democratic public ownership and retooling them to fit the needs of society.

Defeating Trump means developing a political alternative to the status quo of both major parties. Overcoming the rule of the super rich will require first and foremost the creation of a new party in the United States that finds its support among broad sections of the U.S. working class and is willing to take decisive steps to transform our economy and society into one that works in the interest of ordinary people rather than corporations and the billionaire class. ✪

Trump Escalates Attacks on Asylum Seekers

Alicia Salvadeo

President Trump continues his assault on immigrant rights, most recently by changing U.S. asylum policies to erect additional obstacles to safe entry for refuge-seeking migrants. Previously, a federal court ruled in favor of Trump's policy to send asylum-seekers to Mexico while immigration courts decide their cases.

The Trump administration's latest memorandum imposes asylum application fees and refuses work permits to refugees who cross the border illegally to file claims. This aggressively exploits migrants' poverty, denying them access to legal resources and counsel while condemning them to live in overcrowded

and often dangerous border towns with limited shelter or employment. Claims can take years to process through understaffed and underfunded immigration courts. Migrants deported to Mexico also face the increased risk of missing court dates as communication and transportation are impeded across the border.

Trump has also directed the Department of Homeland Security to employ Customs and Border Protection (CBP) law enforcement officers to conduct "credible fear" interviews with asylum-seekers to determine whether their claims deserve a hearing. CBP officers routinely coerce, mislead, and abuse asylum-seekers; their role is to secure the border against the very people they'd be tasked to evaluate! All these changes serve to

effectively cripple asylum rights, and further demoralize and terrorize migrants.

The Real "Con Job"

Trump's redoubled attacks in the name of border security aim to stoke his right-wing base, as he makes immigration a central theme of his 2020 re-election bid. He referred to the right to asylum as a "big con job," insidiously painting undocumented immigrants and refugees as lying, criminal masterminds taking advantage of the system. But the real con is Trump's outlandish, polarizing narratives about mass migration at the southern border, which he uses to politically justify a racist and anti-immigrant agenda. In reality, Central American migrants are fleeing

the unemployment, poverty, and violence that have resulted from devastating U.S. policies, including the "War on Drugs," disastrous trade agreements, and border militarization.

What is clear is that neither the federal courts nor the Democratic Party have sufficiently challenged Trump, and that the humanitarian crisis at the border cannot be solved through "compromise" between Republicans and Democrats. Resolving the crisis at the border will require an end to neo-liberal trade policy and military intervention in Central America. This cannot be achieved through political maneuvering and will require an organized movement of workers both in the U.S. and abroad that takes aim at Trump's agenda as well as the global elite that have created this crisis to begin with. ✪

Wave of Right-Wing Terrorist Attacks Build A Movement to Isolate and Defeat the Far Right

George Martin Fell Brown

The country was in shock on April 27 when a gunman opened fire on congregants of the Chabad of Poway Synagogue in Poway, California during Passover services, killing one and injuring three. The shooting could have been much worse had his gun not malfunctioned after a few rounds. This tragedy came six months to the day after the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, which killed eleven and injured seven. It also came a little over a month after shootings at the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand, which killed 51 and injured 49.

The growth of far-right terrorist attacks in the U.S. and internationally is part of a wider growth of far-right and white nationalist forces. In the U.S. actual fascist groups have experienced a limited growth but the far right has a big presence on the internet. And while fascists are nowhere near building a significant mass movement, their increasing assertiveness poses a clear threat, as evidenced by the recent mass shootings.

The growth of the far-right's presence has been concurrent with the emergence of right-wing populist politicians and parties across the world, most notably through the election of Donald Trump here in the U.S. Trump's promotion of naked xenophobia and his capture of the Republican Party has pulled that party further to the right and helped create the space for the far right.

The Rise of Trump and Right-Wing Populism

The broader context behind the growth of right-wing populism globally and the support from a smaller layer for far-right, fascist, and semi-fascist ideas is the crisis of capitalism. In the U.S., the ferocious attack on the living standards of working people over decades, the embrace by the Democrats and Republicans alike of neoliberalism, combined with the retreat of the labor movement has meant that whole swathes of the American working class have been left to rot.

This was exacerbated by the 2007-2008 financial crisis and its aftermath. While Barack Obama initially raised hopes of overcoming racial division, instead his administration bailed out Wall Street while millions lost their jobs and homes. The failure of the leadership of the labor movement or any section of the Democrats to build resistance to these bipartisan attacks on working people opened the door to the Tea Party. The far right congregated around the edges of the Tea Party and used an overtly racist appeal against the first black president.

Right-wing populists seek to exploit the genuine anger of working people at the situation they face, pointing to immigration, Islam, demographic change, and the breakdown of "family values" as the problem. This creates a narrative that gives people enemies to attack while ultimately defending the status quo. As much as Trump may portray himself as an anti-establishment figure, he has actually delivered

the goods for the establishment, from his tax plan to his anti-union attacks. This ultimately worsens the conditions that give rise to right-wing populist ideas.

In this situation, more extreme far-right forces are able to build a base of support. People who get riled up by Trump's scapegoating of Muslims and immigrants, but frustrated by his inability to make things better, can start being pulled toward the hard right. The flowering of groups like the Proud Boys and Identity Evropa, and the "self-radicalization" of a new generation of far-right mass shooters, is the consequence of capitalism's own reactionary scapegoating.

At the same time it is important not to exaggerate the scale or reach of these groups or their wider influence which a number of people on the left do. For instance, 60% of the U.S. population opposes Trump's border wall, 70% opposes his attempt to suspend the immigration of Syrian refugees to the U.S., and 80% support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. What's going on isn't an overall rightward shift in society but a polarization, seeing the growth of more overt xenophobia as well as tens of millions expressing support for socialism.

Legitimizing the Far Right

Trump's role as a pole of attraction for far-right, semi-fascist, and fascist forces began early. Trump famously hired Steve Bannon, the former executive chairman of the "alt-right" Breitbart News, as his chief strategist for the first seven months of his administration. Most notoriously, following the white supremacist "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, where neo-Nazi James Alex Fields Jr. murdered counter-protester Heather Heyer, Trump refused to condemn the rally, insisting there were "very fine people on both sides."

This served to provide a veil of legitimacy for previously unacceptable forms of white nationalism to be expressed even within the ranks of the Republican party. Far-right candidates like Paul Nehlen, ran for congress in Wisconsin twice, on a slogan of "It's OK to be white," appeared on white-supremacist podcasts, and compiled a list of Jews who were allegedly attacking him. Despite being denounced by the official Republican Party, Nehlen managed to get 11.1% in the 2018 Republican primary and 15.9% in the 2016 Republican primary.

While Nehlen still represents the fringes of the Republican party, a softer form of far-right bigotry has gained respectability in the party, as seen in the case of figures like Corey Stewart who narrowly lost the Virginia Republican gubernatorial primary in 2017 and won the Senatorial primary in 2018. He not only refused to condemn the Charlottesville fascist rampage, but he condemned fellow Republicans who did condemn it. He praised Nehlen as one of his "personal heroes" and, unlike Nehlen, had the active backing of the Trump administration in his primary challenges.

One feature of the 2018 midterm elections was that candidates with indirect links to the far-right, like Stewart, were able to achieve a certain amount of success. Explicit white nationalist candidates like Nehlen generally did badly, although not as badly as many would hope for.

Trump and Right-Wing Violence

In the case of the Christchurch Mosque shooting, the shooter held up Trump as "a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose." But the connection between Trump and far-right violence isn't always as straightforward. The shooters at the Synagogues in Pittsburgh and Poway both denounced Trump from the right, with the Pittsburgh shooter calling Trump a "globalist" and the Poway shooter calling him a "pro-Zionist traitor."

One of the features of these far-right terrorist attacks is that they came from "self-radicalizing" individuals with no known history of political affiliation. None of the shooters had any direct connection with any established far-right or fascist groups in the U.S. or New Zealand

These circumstances are similar to those behind a number of recent attacks in the west carried out by self-described Islamic fundamentalists. Attacks like the Orlando shooting and the Nice truck attack from 2016, or the Strasbourg shooting in 2018, were claimed by ISIS. But, like the recent far-right attacks, these attacks weren't centrally coordinated by any organization. Rather they were the product of "self-radicalizing" individuals, acting on their own, while being influenced by the wider right-wing Islamic fundamentalist milieu that ISIS grew out of. And trying to stop attacks like these just by cracking down on existing organizations will prove ineffective.

Despite the similarities, U.S. law enforcement, including at federal level has a striking unwillingness to describe white-nationalist attacks as "terrorism." This designation is reserved for attacks carried out by those claiming to represent ISIS. Meanwhile Trump



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falsely claims that hordes of terrorists are coming across the Southern border while ignoring the home-grown terrorists in our midst.

The radicalization of the individuals involved in the recent right-wing terrorist attacks was also connected to the spread of far-right ideas on social media. All three shooters were active on the 4chan and 8chan message boards which also drove the right-wing, anti-feminist #Gamergate campaign. The Christchurch shooter live-streamed his shooting and the Poway shooter attempted to livestream his.

Rather than blaming Trump as an individual for the rise of the far right, it's more accurate to say that the rise of Trump and the rise of the far right are both attributable to the same material forces. The right-wing populism of Trump and the fascist and semi-fascist ideas motivating the recent attacks both thrive on making scapegoats out of Jews, Muslims, immigrants, minorities and other oppressed groups.

Change the System!

The Democratic Party has reacted with horror at the far-right terror attacks from Charlottesville to the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue. Joe Biden brought up the murder of Heather Heyer in his campaign launch video, albeit without consulting Heyer's family. However, the Democratic Party provides no way forward in taking on the rise of the far-right. They have been willing in the past to engage in their own bigoted scapegoating when it suits them. For instance, in 2006, Biden argued that a border fence was needed to stop the "tons" of drugs that were "all coming up through corrupt Mexico."

Even when not engaging in the direct scapegoating that foments the far-right, the Democratic Party establishment has overseen the neoliberal assault on the working class that has helped such far-right appeals to gain a hearing in the first place.

To take on the far-right we need mass mobilization of the working class. The response in Boston to the Charlottesville massacre – a demonstration of over 40,000 on August 19, 2017 that shut down and drowned out an alt-right "free speech" rally – pushed the far-right back into the internet forums for a period. Unions and anti-racist organizations have a critical role to play in mobilizing the broadest forces possible against the far right and their hate-filled agenda. We need to build mass movements of working and oppressed people, to unite in the streets, on campuses, and in our workplaces against racism, sexism,



Unite the right rally brought hundreds of white nationalists in Charlottesville, VA in 2017.

xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism.

But the working class in action can accomplish more than just beating back the far-right. They can take on the conditions that allow the far-right to grow. We need to build a movement that can fight for union rights, Medicare

for all, a \$15 an hour minimum wage, and a Green New Deal for working people. We need to build an independent working-class party that can take on attacks from the Democratic and Republican parties alike. Ultimately we need to take on the capitalist system itself,

and establish a socialist system, where the economy is run democratically in the interests of all. We need to abolish the capitalist system that allows far-right terror to fester. ✪

The Working Class Struggle Against the Far Right

Tom Crean

The current wave of white nationalist attacks has its roots in specific developments of the past period. But there is also, of course, a longer history of white supremacist violence, stretching from the original Ku Klux Klan's terror campaign against freed slaves during Reconstruction to the 15th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham in 1963 to the Klan's broad daylight massacre of leftists in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1979.

Frequently in the past, the cross burners, bombers, and lynchers were aided and abetted by sections of the police and the ruling elite who have sought to use white supremacist violence to deal blows especially to black people's struggles for equality and justice. But the Klan and other fascists have had other targets including Jews, leftists, and labor organizers. Today the fascists overlap with the most extreme wing of the "pro-life" anti-abortion movement.

Historically, fascism in Europe was used as a club in the 1920s and '30s to defeat the movements of the working class which threatened to end the capitalist profit system altogether. In the U.S., racial division, enforced through segregationist policies but supplemented by state and white-supremacist violence, was used by the ruling class to maintain its control.

At this point, the fascists in the U.S. are not in a position to build a real mass base. But the influence of far-right ideas is growing and there is no room for complacency. Besides the new wave of murderous attacks, what is alarming is Trump's success in

increasing racial division which undermines any effort to push back against the massive inequality and exploitation which characterize neoliberal capitalism. And if the labor movement and the left do not rise to the challenge of the next period, the road would be open to something worse than Trumpism developing a real base.

Black and white workers, native born and immigrant face different situations but they also have common interests. At the end of the last decade, tens of thousands of black women were victims of the "sub-prime loans" pushed by the banks and lost their homes. This was part of the massive loss of wealth by the black population caused by the economic crisis. Meanwhile the scourge of opioid addiction has ripped through white working-class communities in the Midwest and the Northeast where good, unionized manufacturing jobs have largely become a thing of the past. Deaths due to overdoses have contributed to a significant increase in mortality among working-class people. Aren't all of these working communities victims of neo-liberal capitalism? Do they not share a common enemy?

The Role of the Labor Movement

The Congress of Industrial Organizations, a union federation now part of the AFL-CIO, showed workers in the midst of the Great Depression that there was a different road: uniting against the bosses. They won real gains for white and black workers. If a mass working-class party had been built in 1930s and 40s period, far more could have been achieved and capitalism itself could have been challenged.

When fascism sought to gain a mass base in Britain in the '30s they were pushed back by the labor movement, socialists, and Jewish workers at the Battle of Cable Street in 1936. Socialist Alternative's forebears in the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party mobilized 50,000 workers to fight back against a fascist rally in New York's Madison Square Garden in 1939.

Today we see the beginning of a real fightback by working people, which began with teachers in states that Trump won in 2016. Hillary Clinton dismissed all who voted for Trump as "deplorables" but many Trump voters joined the mass protests less than two years later in West Virginia, Arizona, and Oklahoma demanding properly funded schools and fighting the Republican politicians.

Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign in 2016 appealed precisely to the common interests of working people against the "billionaire class." This is what made the billionaires so worried and what electrified the hundreds of thousands who came out to his rallies.

Defeating the far right will not be achieved by better police intelligence or liberal hand-wringing. It requires building a force that is serious about fighting for all working people, against racism, inequality, and capitalism which is the source of the hatred and division. Just as many who voted for Trump would have voted for Bernie if he had been on the ballot in November 2016, we can win back many people seduced by the racist right-wing conspiracy theories. But to truly isolate and defeat the reactionaries and fascists, people need a vision of the future worth fighting for. This is why the struggle against the far right is inseparable from the struggle for socialism. ✪

Chinese Regime Fears Working-Class Revolt

Tiananmen Square Movement of 1989 Reverberates Today



A pro-democracy movement leader talks into a microphone as he gives a press conference in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Joshua Koritz

In 1989, Chinese students and workers shook the world. Hundreds of thousands occupied Tiananmen Square in Beijing and thousands more participated throughout the country. The movement paralyzed the Chinese bureaucracy which was slowly transitioning the planned economy toward capitalism.

Forty years earlier, the Chinese Revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) overthrew capitalism and landlords. Foreign capitalist interests were expelled and all production brought into state ownership. But unlike the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Chinese Revolution was based on a peasant uprising, not on democratic workers councils. While the revolution was a massive step forward it was also deformed at birth with a regime modelled on Stalinist Russia.

The 1989 movement was primarily a revolt against the bureaucratic organization of the planned economy - not, as some claimed, a desire to return to capitalism (though there was a minority who held illusions in capitalism). As this movement grew, it turned into a challenge to the domination of the Chinese bureaucracy.

However, the tops of the CCP were not willing to go quietly and a revolutionary situation was posed. Students began the initial movement demanding democracy and an end to corruption. They were joined in the streets by workers who quickly set up their own independent organizations of struggle. Huge sections of the army supported the struggle and refused orders to suppress the movement. Eventually the Chinese bureaucracy brought in regiments that had been kept in seclusion in order to violently put down the movement.

Today, the Chinese working class is larger than ever but unlike thirty years ago, the Chinese economy is based on a form of "state capitalism" relying on police state methods. Thus a revolutionary workers movement today would not limit itself to political change but would also roll back the market-based "reforms" to reinstate a planned economy but crucially under the democratic control of the working people themselves.

The Chinese regime now seeks to challenge the U.S. and other imperialist powers for control of markets and global political influence. However, the Chinese government,

corporations, and billionaires quake at the thought of the working class moving into action, as it did thirty years ago in a movement that culminated in the Tiananmen Square Massacre on June 4, 1989.

Students at the Start - Pro-Democracy

Stalinism, as existed in China, a political system based on the rule of a parasitic caste, was not stable. Leon Trotsky first explained that it would enter into crisis with two possible outcomes: a regime based on workers' democracy pointing toward socialism or the restoration of capitalism.

By the late 1980s, economic crises alongside the movements demanding democratic reforms in the USSR and the Eastern Bloc affected Chinese society, particularly students who were angered by corruption and saw democratic reforms as a crucial demand.

In the leadership of the Chinese "Communist" Party (CCP) there were, and remain power struggles centered around the speed of market-based reforms. That balance shifted when in the spring of 1989, Hu Yaobang, a party leader seen as being more pro-democracy, died of a heart attack. Two days later, on April 17, 700 students and teachers marched into Tiananmen Square. They chanted "long live democracy," "down with corruption," and "down with autocracy" (*Tiananmen 1989: Seven Weeks That Shook the World*, ChinaWorker.info).

Five days later, ignoring a government prohibition, 200,000 flooded into Tiananmen Square. This movement grew at a rapid pace, eventually including over one million people in 110 cities across China. Students declared an indefinite strike and set up an "autonomous federation" to coordinate.

Chinese Workers Step to the Front

While students kicked off the movement and were the most visible aspect in the occupation of Tiananmen Square, the working class came to the fore in this struggle. The urban working class had grown far stronger since the 1949 Revolution. The Chinese bureaucracy was terrified of this force

organizing for itself against the interests of the ruling caste who were increasingly focused on commerce with the U.S. and the rest of capitalist world.

In mid-May, this is exactly what happened. Workers from across the country demonstrated outside the headquarters of the All China Federation of Trade Unions demanding independent unions - not ones controlled by the state and CCP. Everywhere, working people were organizing, going on strike, and demonstrating for democracy.

The Chinese bureaucracy's strategy was to divide the growing workers' movement from the students in Tiananmen. At first, the students actively resisted the solidarity of the workers, but the working class intrinsically knew it had to unite. Students began a hunger strike and the supporting demonstration drew workers from factories and workplaces around Beijing, totaling half a million people on May 19.

The Reaction of the Bureaucracy

At first, the ruling politburo (the top CCP body) attempted to dialog with the students - multiple leaders visited the Square in person. However with the entrance of the working class into the struggle, the tone changed quite quickly. On May 20, martial law was declared.

The bureaucracy found its normal tools for maintaining control were no longer reliable. The police in Beijing had withdrawn from the streets, yet with students directing traffic and maintaining order, crime actually went down. Meanwhile, students and workers visited the military barracks and found sympathetic ears.

Finally, starting on June 4, the army swept into Tiananmen Square firing live ammunition on protestors, driving tanks over any person in its way, and leaving up to 1,000 people dead - though recently uncovered evidence suggests up to 10,000 casualties. Eyewitness accounts describe a massacre, not just in the Square, but in the surrounding neighborhoods as the Chinese regime drowned the movement in blood.

Lessons for Today

The dominant view among students was that eventually the government would have to

compromise with the movement's demands. This appeal to power fell disastrously short.

Had a revolutionary socialist party existed in China at that time, it would have warned that Stalinist regimes were prepared to crush workers' movements that threatened their political rule. While supporting the students' demands for democracy, it would have pointed to the limitations of capitalism and the dangers of further market reforms. Instead, a revolutionary party would have defended the planned economy but argued that it should be taken out of the hands of the bureaucracy. It would have argued for democratic elections to the boards of the state-owned companies throughout China - putting the economy directly into workers' control. It would have called for an assembly of the movements in workplaces and universities while reaching out to rural communities as well.

Can History Repeat?

The defeat of the political revolution in 1989 was a key event in the Chinese bureaucracy moving decisively toward capitalism. The children of the rulers at that time have become billionaire "princelings" and the state allows considerably less democratic dissent.

However, today the potential power of the Chinese working class is even greater. According to World Bank statistics, China was 25% urban in 1989, today that number stands at over 58%.

The Chinese working class may be ready to move again. In 2010, the Financial Times estimated that there were about 80,000 "mass incidents" - which is the term the Chinese use for mass protests or labor demonstrations - per year in China.

On June 4 of this year, massive commemorations of the Tiananmen Square movement will take place in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Chinese government will do everything in its power to prevent this spirit from reaching the mainland, but repression cannot stamp out an idea. The memory of June 4, 1989 will inspire the next generation of workers and youth to stand up and challenge the Chinese "communist" government - a challenge which has the potential to inspire the working class worldwide. ☪

Venezuela After the Coup Attempt

Which Way Forward?



Leon Pinsky

On April 30, Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó called for mass protests and also appealed to the military to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro. This became one of the most serious coup attempts in Venezuela since the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution in the late 1990s.

Socialist Alternative completely opposes Trump's threat of military intervention and sanctions in Venezuela.

Failed Coup

Only a few military personnel joined Guaidó as the day proceeded. There were mass protests showing strong popular support for Maduro, but there is also growing desperation due to extreme poverty and the collapse of the economy in Venezuela which translates into support for Guaidó's opposition.

Maduro has declared that "the skirmish in Venezuela has been defeated" while Guaidó said that Maduro has no support among the military nor the people. In reality, the problems which brought the situation to a boiling point are far from being solved and the crisis is far from being over.

Since April 30, the Maduro government has detained the National Assembly Vice President and fired 55 armed forces officers for their role in the failed coup. Venezuela's National Constituent Assembly has also revoked the parliamentary immunity of seven opposition deputies, opening the way for criminal prosecution. Leopoldo Lopez, a major opposition leader who escaped house arrest and participated in opposition rallies, is now hiding in the Spanish ambassador's residence as there is a new arrest warrant against him.

U.S. Backing the Coup Leaders

As April 30 developed into chaotic clashes, U.S. secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, gave a revealing interview to Fox News where he stated that while the U.S. government would prefer a "peaceful" transition of power, a military option is on the table. As we've seen throughout history, the U.S. ruling class has not hesitated to support right-wing dictatorships or intervene militarily to advance their own interests, particularly in Latin America.

Inter-Imperialist Tensions

Russian and Chinese support for the Maduro government is based on their

economic relationship. Venezuela, one of the largest oil exporters in the world, has relied on the two countries as prominent buyers and lenders. In March, China became the largest buyer of Venezuelan oil since the U.S. imposed sanctions on the national oil company, PDVSA.

Aside from that, China and Russia are also Venezuela's largest creditors and are seeking to guarantee that their loans will be paid back. As Guaidó seems to stand on the side of U.S. imperialism, and might be unreliable when it comes to paying the debt, the Russian and Chinese governments are taking the side of Maduro against the Venezuelan opposition.

On the other hand, the U.S. government's call for regime change is connected to their ongoing attempt to undermine Russian and Chinese global influence. For decades, U.S. companies and their local collaborators dominated Latin America and particularly oil-rich Venezuela, power that the U.S. government is now frantically aiming to re-assert. It is a panicked reaction to the U.S.'s declining global power, especially in light of the ongoing trade conflict with China.

It is clear that despite their rhetoric about humanitarian concern or "restoration of democracy," the real aim of the U.S. government is to advance its interests and the interests of the corporations it represents. Otherwise, Trump wouldn't have imposed severe sanctions that, according to a new study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, have caused 40,000 deaths in Venezuela. If the Venezuelan opposition cared about workers, they wouldn't have prevented the regime from accessing its gold holdings - the majority of its foreign reserves. This has contributed to strangling the economy, and starving the population.

All Venezuelan accounts in the U.S. are now held in the hands of the opposition, which also means that any oil bought by the U.S. (top buyer of Venezuelan oil before March) would profit Guaidó's opposition rather than the public. Francisco Rodriguez, a pro-capitalist Venezuelan economist, estimated that U.S. sanctions would cause the Venezuelan economy to shrink by an incredible 37% in this year.

Joe Biden, Chuck Schumer, and other key Democratic leaders openly support a Venezuelan regime change. For their part, "democratic socialist" representatives such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez have failed to provide any serious alternative to the approach of Trump, as well as of that of the leadership of the Democrats. This is in



Some in the Bolivarian National Guard joined Juan Guaidó's failed coup.

part due to their own limitations of looking for solutions within the capitalist system. What is needed now to defeat the threat of U.S. imperialism and counterrevolution in Venezuela is a mass movement to break from the brutality of capitalism and harness Venezuela's wealth in the interests of working people.

Left Populism

U.S. and Venezuelan capitalists are long-ing to restore naked corporate domination over the economy. It was this type of neo-liberal regime and the total catastrophe it represented for working people that led to a wave of struggle by workers and indigenous people across Latin America in the 1990s. During this period a number of left-wing populist governments came to power including that led by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela based on the "Bolivarian Revolution." Chavez spoke of bringing about "21st century socialism" and was enormously popular internationally.

Under mass pressure from below, those governments enacted a series of important social and economic reforms. However, they were limited by their refusal to break with the for-profit system of capitalism and take key sectors of the economy into public ownership while appealing to the working class of the continent to join them in moving toward genuine socialism. This approach failed to solve the underlying realities that propelled their rise in the first place. The Chavez government relied on high oil prices in the 2000s to fund social programs. When the price of oil dropped they were unable to sustain these reforms. This shows the fundamental mistake of relying on the ups and downs of the global capitalist market.

After many further mistakes, Maduro, Chavez's successor, is left relying on the military for his survival. The country is now dominated by a repressive military bureaucratic caste. Despite the regime's "socialist" rhetoric, the working class has been reduced to a support role, mainly just showing up for protests. The largest pro-Maduro trade union, the National Workers' Union of

Venezuela (Unión Nacional de Trabajadores de Venezuela, UNT) and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV) are not playing the role of organizing workers to take power. What is urgently necessary is to create a new socialist force that mobilizes working people against imperialism and the right wing while also opposing the rule of the Maduro caste and pointing toward the decisive measures necessary to solve the crisis.

It is very likely that Maduro will not be able to sustain his government under these conditions. A return to a right-wing government and the defeat of the Bolivarian Revolution would represent a massive setback for the workers and most oppressed. The new regime will aim to rollback as much as possible the gains won by workers and the poor. But beyond that, the right wing in Latin America and internationally will use this to paint anything that is left-wing or socialist as a failure. Socialists must explain the history and the real causes of the crisis in Venezuela.

Facing this new situation, Venezuelan workers will continue to look for ways to fight back against their oppression in any way possible. The immediate solution to this desperate crisis would require workers taking over the factories and farms as well as the banks and restarting the collapsed economy based on a democratically agreed plan. All foreign debt should be cancelled.

If the U.S. government opposes the current Venezuelan regime, they would oppose a democratic workers republic ten times more. A socialist Venezuela would have to make an appeal for workers in other countries to stand with it in struggle. It is for that reason that workers in the U.S., throughout Latin America, and around the world should call for lifting all sanctions on Venezuela and for an end to the saber rattling of U.S. imperialism. Instead they should join hands with Venezuelan workers in fighting for a new society based on collaboration, innovation, and solidarity: A socialist society. ☪

South Carolina Teachers Walk Out on May 1

Ranson Thomas

Teachers in South Carolina are following the lead of teachers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, Los Angeles, and most recently Oakland. They are beginning to organize and fight for better wages and working conditions, joining teachers in North Carolina, who have been organizing for the past year. Last month on May 1, International Workers Day, over 10,000 teachers came out to protest at the state capitol building in Columbia, South Carolina. This protest was the first ever walkout of its kind by teachers in South Carolina and completely closed seven school districts throughout the state for the day.

The education system in South Carolina is ranked 42nd in the country (*US News & World Report*) and the median salary for all workers in the state is slightly over \$32,000 a year, the sixth-lowest in the country (*USA Today*). Teachers in South Carolina staged the walkout over more than just low wages, however. They brought forward issues like the lack of bathroom breaks during the day, and the under-funding of school programs.

At the same time in North Carolina, 34 school districts cancelled classes as teachers throughout the state protested at the state

capitol in Raleigh for higher wages and, critically, for Medicaid expansion in North Carolina. Another important factor in the protest was that teachers at many charter schools joined in the walkouts, causing at least 10 charter schools to close on May 1 as well. This action in North Carolina shows how teachers across the board were able to recognize their shared concerns and needs, and by protesting on behalf of Medicaid expansion, also demonstrated that the issues they care about are not just limited to their classrooms but are also linked to broader issues like fixing our broken health care system.

In South Carolina, collective bargaining was made illegal for public sector workers by an anti-union, reactionary order from the State Supreme Court in 2000. This means that, while teachers can join a union, that union doesn't have legal grounds to negotiate a contract directly with the state. This law makes South Carolina one of the most anti-union states in the U.S. and a very difficult place for teachers to assert their collective power. In many states, including "blue states" like New York, while public sector workers have the right to collective bargaining, it is illegal for them to strike. These limitations can be circumvented if the union has the political will, community support, and



Teachers rally in Columbia, SC

rank-and-file strength to carry out a strike.

Under the particular conditions in South Carolina, mass sickouts and even "Red For Ed" actions (days on which teachers organize to all wear red) are important initial steps. During the May 1 protest, the teachers called in sick to attend the demonstration so as to avoid formally calling a "strike." It is important to note that this day of action was organized by a rank-and-file educators' group called SC for Ed rather than by the official union which in the end supported the actions.

These continued labor actions by teachers are part of the inevitable reaction to the inequality and systemic shortcomings of capitalism to provide meaningful wages to teachers, who are some of our most critical workers, or to adequately fund education for all students. Going forward, working-class people all over the country will need to learn from the example set by our teachers and take up similar bold and unapologetic fights in our own workplaces. ✊

#ColumbusStudentsDeserve Fully Funded Schools

Dana White

On Wednesday, April 24, more than a thousand teachers and community members in Columbus, Ohio marched together to fight for school funding and an end to corporate tax handouts. As part of their recently launched #ColumbusStudentsDeserve campaign to support their contract negotiations, teachers in the Columbus Education Association (CEA) are taking special aim at the millions of dollars that have been drained from our public schools in recent years by extravagant tax handouts to wealthy corporations.

Teachers Take On Corporate Tax Handouts

In March 2018, John Coneglio became the first union president to defeat an incumbent in CEA history with a sweeping 55% victory to the incumbent's 30%. The new union leadership kicked off school board negotiations this March by launching a set of demands that reflect the fighting mood among teachers nationally. Negotiations have only just begun and no offers have been made, but teachers

have only until this summer break before the current 2017 contract expires.

At the spirited rally, teachers chanted "Pharma got handouts, kids got sold out!" This chant referenced CoverMyMeds, a Columbus-based corporation owned by the sixth most profitable corporation nationwide, which was recently granted a 100% 15-year tax abatement by the Columbus City Council that could drain up to \$55.6 million in tax revenue from the school district.

After marching to CoverMyMeds teachers made their way to Columbus City Hall. Teachers speaking to the crowd invoked the role the all-Democrat Columbus City Council has played in willingly handing out tax abatements to corporations while ignoring the growing education and housing issues our community faces.

Fighting for Quality Public Education

The campaign launched by the new union leadership includes demands for much-needed wage increases, but the CEA is even more focused on pushing back against the

rampant corporate control that has led to years of cutbacks and underfunding that hurt students' needs. Columbus teachers are fighting for smaller class sizes, funding for arts and music education, more nurses and counselors, expanded alternative discipline programs to address the school-to-prison pipeline, adequate compensation, and an end to giant tax handouts to wealthy corporations.

A math teacher at the march described the defunding of Columbus City Schools as a "slow burn." Many teachers were laid off years ago, and teachers have had to adjust to the increased workload, larger class sizes, and lack of support. In addition to layoffs, nearly one-third of full time educators hired since 2012 have left the district, and these positions are often eliminated rather than replaced.

Winning the Schools #ColumbusStudentsDeserve

As the CEA bargaining team continues negotiations, now is the time to continue building momentum from outside the bargaining room to keep the pressure on the

School Board and City Council. Planning for a larger rally, even a teacher walk-out, before the end of the school year, could help send a signal to the School Board and City Council that teachers, parents, and students are ready to continue fighting for the schools #ColumbusStudentsDeserve.

In conversations with teachers at the march, many expressed that, while striking is a last resort, they are willing to do whatever it takes to come out of this contract battle with a victory. Organizing support now from parents and students and across the community will help continue to build pressure for the current ongoing negotiations but also can help prepare the wide community support that would be needed if teachers do decide that a strike is needed.

The national teachers' revolt sparked last year through the courageous West Virginia teachers strike is clearly not over. Teachers' victories around the country, including in West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Los Angeles, and Oakland, show the power that teachers and the wider working class can wield to win the quality public education that students deserve. ✊

Assange Extradition Trump's War on Journalism Continues

Brandon Madsen

On Thursday, May 2 of this year, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange appeared in British court for the first of what is certain to be many hearings on his possible extradition to the U.S. The U.S. wants to prosecute him in relation to Chelsea Manning's 2010 leak of classified U.S. military and State Department documents. The attempt bring the hammer down on Assange for helping to bring this vital information to the public constitutes an attack whose intended target is much broader than Assange himself. It is an assault on the free-speech rights of all citizens, journalists, and media outlets who might otherwise get the idea to expose the truth about U.S. foreign policy.

The extradition proceedings, which may take years to play out, began only one day after a British court sentenced Assange to 50 weeks in prison for skipping bail in 2012. The original arrest was ostensibly related to Assange being accused of sexual assault in Sweden – charges which he should face, but the implicit threat of subsequent extradition to the U.S. to be prosecuted for his Wikileaks activities led Assange to seek refuge rather than surrender himself to the courts.

Since 2012, Assange had been holed up in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where the Ecuadorian government granted him asylum and citizenship, under the government of then-President Rafael Correa, a left populist and Wikileaks supporter. However, the government of Correa's successor, Lenin Moreno, likely bowing to U.S. pressure, revoked Assange's citizenship and asylum status on April 11 of this year, freeing the hand of the Metropolitan Police Service to arrest Assange at the embassy, which they did the very same day.

War on Whistleblowers

Despite Trump famously proclaiming in 2016 "I love Wikileaks," he has made a characteristic about-face. He is now deflecting in apparent deference to his cabinet on the issue of Assange: "I know nothing about Wikileaks. It's not my thing." In fact, it was in Trump-era secret courts in 2018 that the current indictment against Assange originated.

This opportunistic flip-flop is easily explained in the context of Trump's open war against journalists. If Assange is convicted for his Wikileaks activities, it would set a legal precedent for prosecuting investigative journalists for carrying out basic, central components of their work, such as encouraging sources to divulge information or helping sources to remain anonymous. Trump would no doubt be eager to set such a precedent, given his own penchant for lying to the public and evading accountability.

The attempt to extradite Assange must be seen in the context of the ongoing assault on free-speech and personal-privacy rights in the U.S. that has been underway since at least the G.W. Bush administration, which seized on



the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks as an excuse for launching a broad program of secret, warrantless surveillance.

The ramping up of the U.S. police state only accelerated under the Obama administration, which prosecuted more individuals under the 1917 Espionage Act than all previous administrations combined. It was under Obama that Chelsea Manning was sentenced to 35 years in maximum-security prison. Though later pardoned in the final days of the administration, for nearly seven years Manning faced conditions that the UN special rapporteur on torture described as "cruel and inhuman."

Manning's crime? Giving Wikileaks 700,000 classified documents, exposing atrocities committed by the U.S. military, including indiscriminate slaughter, execution of civilians, and calling in a bombing raid to cover up those wrongful executions. Manning's over-the-top punishment is just one more piece of evidence showing how far U.S. imperialism is willing to go to protect itself from accountability to the public.

The Truth Is Only Half the Battle

Julian Assange and Wikileaks have played an important role at shedding light on what really goes on behind the democratic facades of the imperialist powers. It is absolutely correct and in the socialist tradition to expose the corrupt and criminal policies carried out by capitalist governments. In fact, one of the first acts of the workers' government in Russia after overthrowing capitalism in 1917 was to openly publish all the secret treaties between

the European powers, wherein they plotted how to carve up the world according to their geopolitical interests.

Nonetheless, it's one thing to expose these imperialist crimes, but to stop them requires going a step further. It requires a strategy of mass militant campaigning and a clear anti-imperialist, pro-working class position. Wikileaks has neither; as an organization it is not socialist, left-wing, working-class, or democratic. As for Assange himself, he openly met with right-wing politicians such as the UK Independence Party's Nigel Farage while in refuge at the Ecuadorian embassy.

Therefore, Wikileaks is not enough. We need unions and social movement organizations with a fighting strategy to hold politicians accountable and curb runaway corporate power. We need a democratically organized mass movement to ensure that those who ordered the crimes exposed by Wikileaks, Manning, and others are brought to justice. Ultimately, what is needed is a political party of, by, and for working people, with a grassroots accountable leadership, that campaigns tirelessly, year-in, year-out – not only to stop the worst immediate abuses of the capitalist politicians, but also for a positive program of socialist transformation of society. Such a transformation is the only way to guarantee that no more innocent lives around the world are sacrificed to the whims of corporate U.S. imperialism in its endless quest for geopolitical dominance – or in attempts to cover up its crimes. ✪

Socialist Alternative Demands:

- ✪ Drop the charges against Assange in the U.S.! Sweden's sexual assault investigation should continue unimpeded - but without the threat of U.S. extradition.
- ✪ Declassify the details of U.S. spending overseas in Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond. Expose all corruption and war crimes!
- ✪ Stop the war on whistleblowers and journalists! No more prosecutions for exposing and reporting on government lies!
- ✪ Dismantle the war machine and surveillance state! Bring the troops home, end the drone program, and ban secret courts and warrantless surveillance. ✪

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Anna Barnett

Fifty years ago the modern LGBTQ movement burst onto the scene. Mass anger at the repression of LGBTQ people had been bubbling under the surface. It exploded at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City's Greenwich Village. A routine police raid on June 28, 1969 escalated into a five-day rebellion in the streets that sent reverberations of "Gay Power" across the world.

Inspired by the massive shifts taking place in society at the time with the black freedom and women's liberation movements, the Stonewall riots represented a determined fight against the system for the right to live openly and safely. Stonewall was a turning point for LGBTQ struggle in the U.S.

Workers and youth should take inspiration from this history and apply the lessons to the struggle for LGBTQ rights and the fight against Trump and the right wing today.

Trump and the Right Wing's Attacks

The election of Trump and his notoriously anti-LGBTQ Vice President Mike Pence has been a serious threat to LGBTQ rights. Trump's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) threatened late last year to narrowly define gender based on sex assigned at birth which would have essentially legalized and condoned discrimination against transgender people in all areas of life.

Just last month HHS announced a

regulation that would allow medical providers to refuse services to LGBTQ patients, including lifesaving care, based on their personal beliefs. This measure would be throwing gas on the flames of an already dire situation. In the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, 23% of respondents did not see a doctor when needed because of fear of mistreatment, and 33% did so because they could not afford it.

Trump's election has also emboldened the far right leading to a spike in hate crimes after his election. Trump's right-wing, anti-worker policies disproportionately affect LGBTQ people, compounding the oppression we already face in society.

Young People Ready to Fight Back

Despite these attacks and the oppression that LGBTQ people face today, society has moved a long way toward acceptance of LGBTQ equality. This shift was not an inevitable result of the passage of time, but instead the direct consequence of decades of fightback.

These inspiring struggles have influenced a whole generation of young people who are rejecting transphobia and homophobia at unprecedented rates and are looking for solutions to the increasingly unequal society we are facing. Tremendous support exists today to expand on the previous victories of the LGBTQ movement, and build a coordinated national movement for improved Medicare for All, LGBTQ inclusive affordable housing, and to fight discrimination and bigotry in all its forms.

In addition, the #Red4Ed teachers strikes have shown that movements are strongest when they are broadened out to reach and engage the widest possible layers of people. Teachers and staff went on strike for more than their own wages and benefits; they fought alongside parents and students for better learning conditions. This is a shining example for the LGBTQ movement about the power that working people can have when we unite and fight together.

Pride Is Political

June is now marked by pride parades in almost every city in the country which serve as an important demonstration of visibility. Unfortunately, these events are now dominated by corporations and big banks - pushing grassroots activism and politics to the side. This means that corporate Democrats are featured despite not showing any real lead in opposing Trump or fighting for the policies the majority of LGBTQ people need. Big banks and corporations, like Wells Fargo and Walmart, who claim to support us are the same ones paying us poverty wages, funding mass incarceration, and destroying the environment. How can we count on these companies or the corporate politicians they support to represent us?

Shifting attitudes alone is no guarantee; in a system that is stacked against working people, we will need a strong, organized movement open to full democratic participation to win real victories. We need to bring the fierce determination of Stonewall to the fight

against Trump and the far right. The kind of movement necessary to take down Trump and win gains for LGBTQ people will have to be built from the ground up, and be based on solidarity between all working-class people. Our movement must depend on our collective strength, not the cynical "support" of billionaires or their bought-off politicians. We need tactics like mass rallies, marches, strikes, and civil disobedience.

What Will It Take To Win?

The LGBTQ movement should celebrate Pride month by organizing explicitly political mass rallies to fight discrimination and demand Medicare for All that would include mental health services, reproductive health care, and transition-related care. Our movement should reach out to labor unions supporting Medicare for All, especially health care workers, and reproductive justice organizations fighting to defend *Roe v. Wade*. Unions should also actively reach out to LGBTQ organizations and participate in the struggle for equal rights.

On the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion we can draw inspiration from its participants who showed a courageous rejection of the status quo. By standing shoulder to shoulder with movements of all working and oppressed people we have the power to topple the current capitalist system and build a socialist society based on democracy and human need, where each unique individual can thrive free of discrimination and bigotry. A socialist world is possible! 🌈