

# SEP candidate D'Artagnan Collier takes part in Detroit mayoral debate

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D'Artagnan Collier, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate in the upcoming Detroit mayoral election, participated in a July 16 debate hosted by the Liberty Temple Baptist Church. The event was open all six candidates who will appear on the August 4 primary ballot, including Collier, Robert Allman, Jerroll Sanders, Duane Montgomery, Tom Barrow, and current Democratic mayor, David Bing. Of these, all but Bing—who is the favored candidate of the corporate and media establishment—participated.

Collier outlined a socialist response to the vast social problems facing workers and young people in city, which has been ravaged by decades of plant closings and mass layoffs in the auto industry. “I am running in this campaign to tell workers the truth,” Collier said in his opening statement. “Capitalism has failed. Both the Democrats and the Republicans represent the interests of big business. The only solution for the working class is breaking with these two big business parties, and forming an independent party of workers.”

Collier's answers to the moderators' questions clearly stood out amid the tired, empty rhetoric of the other candidates who were chiefly concerned with winning the backing of the corporate interests that run the city. When questioned what they would do about crime, the majority of the candidates blamed the problem on the working class and an alleged “culture of crime” in the city.

Collier declared in no uncertain terms that crime in Detroit cannot be separated from the poverty, joblessness and deindustrialization the city has been subjected by “a decades-long counteroffensive of Wall Street” against the working class.

“The biggest crime in the country,” Collier said, “is the looting of the public treasury to cover the losses of Wall Street investors.” Referring to the conditions of youth, which he said was a barometer of any society, he said, “young people in Detroit only understand that the system has no future for them, and they are angry and frustrated. Without a proper outlet for this frustration, they turn to violence and crime. But this is not their fault,” he said, condemning the corporations and Democratic politicians, which had overseen the impoverishment of the city, along with the union and official civil rights organizations that have colluded in this attack.

In contrast, one of the other candidates, Duane Montgomery, a human resources and engineering consultant, proposed that all city workers be compelled to function as “public safety officers,” acting as water and sewage plant operators, park rangers and police officers dealing with “lesser-priority crimes.”

In response to the moderator question about what the candidates would do about the budget crisis in Detroit, Collier said, “This must be viewed in the context of a national and global economic crisis. We must take back the money that has been stolen from the working class by turning the big banks into publicly owned and democratically controlled utilities. I reject the claim that there is no money to rebuild Detroit. There is plenty of money, but it is a matter of who controls the resources of society.”

Other candidates, most specifically business owners Sanders and Barrow, proposed, “trimming money off the top.” “Without even going downtown I am positive that I can find \$50 million off the top of the city's budget, at least,” Sanders claimed.

The city is already reeling from a massive financial

crisis, the product of years of tax breaks to big business and the downsizing of industry. Virtually every department of the city has undergone incapacitating budget cuts. Robert Bobb, the so-called financial czar of the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) recently declared that the fiscal crisis was so severe he will likely declare public school system bankrupt.

David Bing, one of the wealthiest black businessmen in the country, is committed to intensifying the reactionary policies of his Democratic predecessors—more budget cutting, attacks on city workers and social programs, privatization of city services, tax abatements and other incentives for big business, and law-and-order repression. For this reason the city’s corporate elite and news media have already coronated him as the next mayor of Detroit, with the election presented as mere formality.

As the mayoral debate demonstrated, the only alternative for the working class is the socialist program advanced by D’Artagnan Collier.



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