

”What is needed is a new political leadership”

## SEP Presidential candidate Jerry White addresses New York meeting

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26 March 2012

Jerry White, the Socialist Equality Party’s (SEP) candidate for president in the 2012 US elections, addressed an audience of about forty workers, students and professionals in Manhattan’s lower east side on Saturday.

White spoke on social inequality in the United States, the drive toward war with Iran and the long history of the struggle by the Trotskyist movement to establish the political independence of the working class.

Placing the present economic crisis in historical perspective, White reviewed the experiences of workers over the past three decades, including the wholesale attack on wages and social programs that began in the 1980s. “The American ruling class launched a social counterrevolution that has continued to this day,” White said. “In fact, it has been escalated since the financial collapse of 2008.”

“We are in a period of more than a decade of unending war, of an intense economic crisis, in which 23 million lack a full-time job and in which over half the American population is now characterized as low-income or poor,” he noted.

“And yet the entire election process is filled with an air of unreality, a complete distance from the needs and the aspirations of the population.

“Obama and his Republican opponents are vying with each other to propose more incentives for Wall Street and trillions in cuts to Medicare, education and other essential social services. At the same time, new wars are being planned,” which threaten to unleash a global

conflict with unimaginable consequences.

White stressed the critical importance of the building of a new political leadership. He noted that there was mass opposition among workers in the United States and internationally to inequality, war and the attack on democratic rights. The experiences of the past several years demonstrated that this opposition by itself was not sufficient.

Noting that this week marked the ninth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, White explained that mass opposition did not stop the war. “The political leadership of the antiwar protests was oriented to the Democratic Party.” This culminated in the election of Obama, who has escalated drone attacks on Pakistan and Yemen, launched a new war against Libya, and is now threatening Syria and Iran.

White reviewed the major political developments of the last year, from Egypt to Wisconsin to Occupy Wall Street. Each of these movements had reached an impasse because they lacked a revolutionary leadership and socialist perspective.

“What is needed above all is a new political leadership,” White continued. “We’re building this party and running in this election to provide a political perspective and a way forward for the struggles of the working class.”

In this context, White laid special emphasis on the campaign waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International to defend the legacy of the Marxist thinker and revolutionary Leon Trotsky from the lies and distortions of Robert Service and other biographers.

In questions and discussion after the speech, White

addressed a number of issues. One worker asked about the SEP's response to the killing of Trayvon Martin in Florida.

"Trayvon Martin's murder is a horrendous act," White said. "The promotion of 'stand your ground' laws has been part of a general attack on democratic rights. In conditions of mass unemployment and shrinking educational opportunities, there will be demagogic forces that will seek to blame immigrant workers, black youth and others.

"It is the most sickening hypocrisy for Obama and other bourgeois politicians to weigh in to express their sympathy. Obama's policies have only intensified mass unemployment and social inequality. In fact he's militarized the border, he's promoted the police. He's a defender of the death penalty. It was police departments run by his fellow Democrats that were pepper-spraying youth in the Occupy moment.

White also reviewed the role of Al Sharpton and other supporters of the Democratic Party, who have quickly moved in to promote race politics. "These forces promote Obama and spread the illusion that the reelection of a black president will do away with the conditions of unemployment, discrimination and violence. This is of course wrong.

"We fight for the greatest unity of the working class. We denounce this crime and insist that the killer must be held accountable. However, it is necessary to address the social and political conditions that give rise to such tragedies, that is, the capitalist system.

In response to a question about Occupy Wall Street, White noted that the SEP had long stressed the fundamental significance of social inequality. "The Occupy protests are an anticipation of a much larger movement of the working class. They primarily involved layers of students and ex-students. While there was widespread sympathy in the working class, it wasn't a working-class movement.

"If social inequality is to be ended, you must attack the source of social inequality. That's capitalism. You can't try to appeal to the conscience and the reason of the powers that be.

"It has to be a struggle against the Democratic Party. You had other political forces there, including some who called themselves anarchist or socialist, who insisted, 'No, we can't have politics because that will only divide us and weaken the unity of this movement.'

Ultimately they embraced the trade unions, and through the unions comes the Democratic Party.

"Over the last 30 years there has been an elevation not only of the 1 percent. There has been another layer, the top five percent, those making \$200,000, \$300,000 a year. They are looking for positions of influence and indeed for more affluence. They're hostile to the working class coming into struggle. To a great extent, it was the politics of this layer that dominated the Occupy protests."

The SEP is fighting for a political leadership in the working class, based on the independent interests of the working class, White said. He concluded by urging all those attending to join the SEP and support the election campaign.

*For more information on the SEP campaign and to get involved, visit [socialequality.com](http://socialequality.com).*



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