

Jerry White speaks in Los Angeles

Our reporters
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On Saturday, Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Jerry White addressed a meeting in Culver City, California. Around 30 workers and youth of diverse ages and backgrounds attended from around the Los Angeles area. For many of those in attendance, it was their first political meeting, and several had traveled significant distances.

The sprawling Los Angeles metropolitan area, home to nearly 13 million people, has been devastated by the combined impact of decades of economic stagnation, decaying infrastructure, and the fallout from the 2008 Wall Street crash, which has translated into exceptionally high rates of home foreclosure and bankruptcy. This situation is exacerbated by Democratic Party-controlled city and state administrations committed to carrying out harsh cuts to social services and education. The official unemployment rate stands at 11 percent.

According to a recent list in *Forbes* magazine, the city also contains the mansions of ten individuals whose combined net worth tops \$42.7 billion.

In his remarks, White explained the reasons for the intervention of the SEP in the 2012 elections. He stressed the “unreality” of the election campaigns being waged by the big-business candidates. All of the essential questions confronting the population—war, social inequality and the attacks on democratic rights—were not in any way being raised or addressed by the official candidates or the major media, White said.

White also drew attention to the recent speech by Obama’s attorney general Eric Holder, in which Holder asserted the right of the president to order the assassination of any person, anywhere in the world, including US citizens. Holder’s speech, White said, proves that there is no constituency for democratic

rights in the political establishment. This makes the Socialist Equality Party’s campaign all the more necessary and urgent.

White also highlighted the recent remarks of President Obama, who said that in order to build an “economy that lasts,” it was necessary to “bring jobs back from overseas.” White explained that this was part of an effort to dramatically lower the wages and living standards of American workers and to turn the United States into a platform for cheap labor.

White denounced the claim that “there is no money” for jobs, health care, and social programs, citing recent figures showing 58,000 individuals in the United States with net worth over \$7.6 trillion.

In response to a question from the audience regarding workers who were “mesmerized by the Republican Party,” White responded by recounting the SEP’s recent experiences among the locked-out Cooper Tire workers in Findlay, Ohio. Findlay is a Republican-controlled city, but the workers responded with enthusiasm to the SEP’s program. Meanwhile, the Republican primaries, endlessly promoted by the media, are the subject of record low voter participation, White explained.

White was also asked to address the urgency of all the pressing issues raised by his campaign, compared with the still relatively limited profile of the SEP. White replied that the question only underscored the necessity of building the Socialist Equality Party. “The key question is building our party,” he said. White pointed to the rich history of socialism in the United States, including in Los Angeles, and urged all those in attendance to join the SEP and to study its history and program.

Broad-ranging and informal discussions, in which White and most of those in attendance participated, continued well after the conclusion of the meeting.

“I found the meeting to be very interesting,” said

Jesus, a student at East LA College majoring in microbiology, “in particular, when he talked about the Cooper Tire workers and how they supported the socialists. I found that to be unusual just because Ohio is basically a red state. It’s something for me to look into.

“The situation at the community colleges is very bad. I applied for financial aid, but that’s been cut. They’ve also cut one fifth of the classes. It’s hard for professors too. Three years ago, tuition used to be \$24 a unit. Now it’s \$46 a unit.

“I think this campaign will attract a lot of attention, and I hope Jerry White will be seriously considered.”

Shihomi is a graphic designer originally from Tokyo, Japan. When asked what she thought of the meeting, her reply was, “Great! I think this is very important. Conditions in Japan one year after the earthquake/tsunami are still very bad. People are dying without food, and yet they’re also distracted by shopping and entertainment. But people are becoming aware that something is wrong. It’s the same here in America. Capitalism is over.

“I left Japan a while ago, but I continue to look at many Japanese blogs. My own mother, who only gets her information from the TV and newspapers, which are owned by politics and not 100 percent true, said there’s no one for her to vote for. She cast an ‘empty vote,’ which means there’s no name on the candidate’s line.

“Right now, many young people in Japan are committing suicide. They feel there’s no hope. The government lies to the people. They don’t tell the truth about the radioactive contamination from the nuclear disaster.”

Vance, a student and an industrial mechanic, traveled from Oceanside, over 90 miles south of LA. “I’ve only been reading the WSWS for about two months and have been investigating several socialist groups. I honestly liked the diverse strata of people here at the meeting. I liked the interaction in the discussion, especially how Jerry White and [SEP National Secretary] Joe Kishore answered the questions. Even when there was disagreement, there was a sense of camaraderie, which was refreshing for me.

“I found the points dealing with economy and history were very good in explaining the overall strategy of the SEP. The problems come in the tactics. I’ve been

reading about anarchism during the Spanish Civil War and also I’ve read Bakunin. They don’t want any government, but they also don’t have an overarching strategy.

“I also read James Cannon’s *America’s Road to Socialism*. Socialism has a plan for where we’re going in society. I think this party has a good starting point.”

Saturday’s show of interest in White’s campaign in Los Angeles comes on the heels of a well-attended meeting in San Diego, California on Friday. From Los Angeles, White will travel north to address upcoming meetings in Berkeley and Sacramento, California, as well as Portland, Oregon.



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