

SEP candidate Phyllis Scherrer campaigns among Brooklyn College students

Our reporting team
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On Monday, Socialist Equality Party vice-presidential candidate Phyllis Scherrer spoke to students at Brooklyn College and distributed the statement by Presidential Candidate Jerry White, “A socialist policy for the victims of Hurricane Sandy”. The campaign team spoke with students about the need for a socialist program to prevent the kind of social disaster that has affected many millions on the East Coast of the United States and in the Caribbean in the wake of Hurricane Sandy.

Monday was the first day that classes resumed at Brooklyn College and at other schools in the New York City area since the storm hit.

Veronica, a state worker and part-time student at Brooklyn College, felt first-hand the impact of the storm and the city’s disastrous response.

“I have no lights and no heat,” she said. “All of the food in my refrigerator had to be thrown out. My car was flooded, and my insurance said no rental cars are available because they got flooded too. It’s been very stressful trying to work full time, and think about school, and taking tests while dealing with the problems after the flood. Some of my friends want me to move in with them, but I want to be at home. I may have to, though, if it doesn’t get better soon.”

She added, “The response of the government is very slow.” After Scherrer noted the difference between the response for those on Wall Street and the city’s wealthier sections compared to that given to working class neighborhoods, Veronica replied: “It’s not good. I think everybody deserves the same response. I was told to call Con Edison by the building’s management. When I called them, they told me that they had to get downtown working first. I asked them why Manhattan first, and not everyone, or the worst cases. I was really, really angry with this. I asked him how this was fair to

put the wealthy in downtown before everyone else. There was definitely a class response.”

After discussion about the class response to the storm and the wealthy getting services restored while millions still languish without power and basic resources, a group of students were able to relate this to the enormous military budget, and the diverting of social resources for destruction. Scherrer explained that she was opposed to imperialist wars being waged around the world in the interests of bankers and transnational corporations.

Suman, an Afghani-born student at Brooklyn College, responded to the SEP’s opposition to Obama’s militarism. “I’m against the war and the drone attacks,” she said. Imran, a fellow Brooklyn College student, added, “Whoever wins it’ll be the same thing that’s happening now. Before they said Obama, because he’s black, would bring change. He said he’d get the troops out, but what happened? They’re still there.”

Scherrer explained that the war drive and the attack on basic democratic rights, including Obama’s drone assassinations, are connected to the growing social inequality in the US. “It is impossible to impose the devastating levels of inequality and austerity that the United States government is preparing against the population, without attacking our most basic constitutional rights. The two go hand in hand,” she said. “This is why a political struggle for our own independence from the Democratic Party, to unite workers internationally in a struggle against capitalist barbarism and war is the central focus of our election campaign.”

The lack of a genuine choice in the elections was a common refrain among students. Hanna Kit explained: “Both candidates say they are fighting for people, but

when they are elected, they are for themselves. Each of them is yelling that their campaign is better than the other, and none of them are doing anything for the people like us. They only do things for the rich.”

Jonathan expressed similar sentiments. “Between Obama and Romney, I’ll pick neither,” he said. “Either way it will be the same situation. Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley are running things.”

Marilyn Garcia, was angry about Obama’s policies on immigration. “When Obama came in, he said he was for change and rights for immigrants. Then, two months before the election he implemented by executive order immigration policy. What is going to happen after the two years that immigrants are protected? This is uncertain. We don’t know what is going to happen. People may be deported because they have no citizenship status.”

When asked about the increased rate of deportations under the Obama Administration Marilyn replied, “I think that the deportations have increased since Obama has been in office. I also like what you say about uniting immigrant workers with workers in the United States and around the world.”



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