

US media steps up witch-hunt over claims of Sanders “violence” in Nevada

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The corporate-controlled mass media in the United States is intensifying its slander campaign against supporters of Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders over allegations of violence during last Saturday’s Nevada state Democratic Party convention.

This campaign continues despite documented falseness of many of the initial claims by state Democratic Party officials. There were no “chairs thrown,” a staple of early media reports (one man apparently brandished a chair, but was persuaded by Sanders supporters to put it down). No one was arrested or charged with any violent action, despite the presence of dozens of Clark County sheriff’s deputies. Many Sanders supporters have posted cellphone videos of the convention online to rebut the charges of violence.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has made clear our political differences with the self-described “democratic socialist” from Vermont. His campaign aims to repackage the Democratic Party, a party of the corporate and financial aristocracy, as a vehicle for social reform, directing the growing anti-capitalist sentiment of millions of workers and youth into a political dead-end.

The attack on Sanders supporters by the Hillary Clinton campaign, the Democratic Party establishment and the media, however, is a political provocation. The media campaign reached new heights of cynical distortion Thursday, as the *New York Times*, which sets the agenda for the television networks and much of the daily press, presented the story in its top-right front-page column, traditionally the location of the most important national news.

Aside from enormously exaggerating the significance of the incidents in Nevada, now five days old, the *Times* published its report under the sensationalized headline, “Sanders Willing to Harm Clinton in

Homestretch.” In the context of an account regurgitating unsubstantiated allegations of violence, the wording of the headline was clearly aimed at suggesting that Sanders and his supporters were capable of physical and not merely political harm to Clinton.

The bulk of the *Times* article was a review of the preparations of the Sanders and Clinton campaigns for the final three weeks leading to the June 7 primaries in California, New Jersey and several smaller states, including an admission by the Clinton camp that Sanders could well prevail in California, the most populous US state, with 475 convention delegates.

Despite the clear evidence of widespread support for Sanders, including his victory May 17 in Oregon, large rallies on an almost daily basis, and polls showing he would do better than Clinton against presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, the *Times* account described Sanders continuing in the presidential race as “deeply troubling to party leaders.”

The report also denounced Sanders’ campaign manager Jeff Weaver, claiming that his attacks on the obvious pro-Clinton bias of the Democratic National Committee had somehow “disheartened” Sanders campaign workers who wanted to unify the party. It went on to sneer at Weaver as a man “who more recently ran a comic book store” and encouraged “a near-obsession with perceived conspiracies on the part of Mrs. Clinton’s allies.”

If the *New York Times* threw the largest volume of mud, the *Washington Post* editorial Thursday was the most politically venomous. After recapitulating the official Democratic Party narrative of what happened at the convention, the editorial denounced Sanders for “self-righteousness and hypocrisy.”

The *Post* then revealed its ferocious political hatred,

directed not so much at Sanders as against the left-wing sentiments that animate his supporters. Sanders, the editorial continued, “has stirred up populist energy over the past several months with anti-corporate scapegoating and extravagant claims about policy. He has indulged and encouraged hyperbolic feelings that the country is badly adrift, that most of the nation agrees with a left-wing agenda but is trapped in a corrupt system, and that nothing but a political revolution will do.”

The *Post* editors actually describe the real political situation in America more sharply than Sanders usually does, and there is nothing “extravagant” or “hyperbolic” about it. Most workers and youth in America *do* agree with a left-wing agenda—full employment, raising wages to a decent level, guaranteed access to health care, education and other public services, an end to war and police violence—even if their agreement is not fully articulate and overlaid by much political confusion about how to achieve it. They *are* “trapped in a corrupt system.” As for “political revolution,” Sanders has sought to transform that concept into a mere electoral mobilization in support of the Democratic Party.

It is clear that the *Post* editors fear something far more sweeping: a genuine mass movement that would threaten the profit system.

There are also clear class reasons for the *Post*’s resentment over “anti-corporate scapegoating.” The newspaper is now owned by one of America’s richest men, Amazon.com boss Jeff Bezos, whose global corporate empire is notorious for low-wage exploitation and brutal sweatshop conditions. The hirelings of Bezos are naturally fearful that the man who signs their paychecks could become the target of a “left-wing agenda.” They fear—and in this they are correct—that the mass support for Sanders only foreshadows a much more radical and sweeping political eruption from below.



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