

Sanders supporters discuss issues outside California rallies

Our reporters
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In the two weeks leading up to the June 7 primary in California, Bernie Sanders has been holding rallies up and down the state. He frequently speaks in two or more cities each day, trying to gain an edge over frontrunner Hillary Clinton to better position himself for the Democratic National Convention in July. Despite trailing in pledged delegates, Sanders has vowed to campaign through the convention.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to workers and youth attending rallies in Santa Barbara and Oakland. The people drawn to Sanders campaign had widely varying conceptions although all were looking for an alternative to the current political system. Most opposed war, despite Sanders's support for Obama's drone assassination and bombing campaigns. Many opposed Clinton specifically or the Democrats generally despite Sanders's repeated statements in support of both. Almost all were drawn to Sanders's claim to be a socialist.

Leading Democratic Party officials, afraid that Sanders cannot line his supporters up behind Clinton, have called on him to withdraw from the race to prevent a contentious convention.

In Oakland on May 30, about 20,000 people came to listen to Sanders speak in Frank Ogawa Plaza. WSWs reporters distributed copies of the election statement of Jerry White and Niles Niemuth for the Socialist Equality Party, and interviewed some of those waiting to get in.

Devin is a 38-year-old visual effects editor from Oakland. "The 2016 election is like a giant circus," he said. "It doesn't make any sense that it might come down to Hillary Clinton and Trump who nobody likes. We've been spoon-fed Hillary, and it makes me sad to see Bernie not be a shoo-in, because his policies represent the interests of so many people.

"I'm absolutely for society not being run by corporations, and I believe education and health care should be free. There needs to be a revolution in thought, not through violence. Bernie has proposed a set of ideas, and now we need to find people who support them and get them elected. I hope this doesn't stop after the election."

Javier, a 17-year-old student from San Francisco, described himself as a Marxist. "I think the election is leading to a political revolution because Sanders has shown us what's wrong with the Democrats," he began. "I feel like his policies on health care and education have a socialist character, but this is just the beginning. There's a lot more that needs to be done after the election."

On the issue of war, Javier was less certain: "I'm not as aware of his stances on foreign policy as I should be, but I know he didn't support the war in Iraq, and if other politicians had listened to him in 2003 then maybe the US wouldn't have entered that terrible war. He also hasn't supported war against Iran, which is important. If the US worked to help other countries, the world would be a better place. But because of imperialism we're not, we're just screwing them over entirely."

Mateen is a 29-year-old bar manager coming from Oakland who did not see Sanders's policies as necessarily socialist. "They're just common sense," he said. "They can be equated with socialist ideals, but they're practical solutions to real problems. Regarding the need for revolution—things need to be turned on their head. We have an auction, not a democracy. We need to raise taxes on the top 1 percent, and anyone making over \$500,000 a year. They don't need that much money."

When asked whether how they would feel if Sanders

formally endorses Clinton's candidacy, the response was overwhelmingly negative. "I can't support the lesser of two evils any more," Mateen said. "I'll make a stand by writing in Bernie." Devin was opposed to an endorsement of Clinton, saying: "It would be a bitter pill to swallow. I couldn't support her no matter what. There's a lot of tough questions to consider though—what happens if Trump becomes president?" Javier was much more emphatic, "If Sanders did that, it would be an F-you to his supporters because he's exposed her so much over the course of the primaries."

When the rally began, Sanders was introduced by actor Danny Glover and economist Robert Reich. The crowd booed Reich when Glover introduced him as former secretary of labor under Bill Clinton. Sanders began his speech by praising Reich, who participated in an administration that began gutting social services through welfare "reform."

"He was one of the greatest secretaries of labor that this country has ever had," Sanders said. "He made clear which side he was on, and that was the side of working people."

At Santa Barbara City College, roughly 6,000 people came to hear Sanders speak on Saturday, May 28.

Echo Zen teaches health education at California State University Channel Islands. "Youth are essential to the future of democracy in the United States," she said. "We're finally seeing a candidate who is able to activate a traditionally uninvolved demographic, the young people. That's why I'm here. I see how youth are responding, and it's very heartening."

"One can certainly argue that his ideas don't go far enough. But let's not forget that maybe 10 or 20 years ago, to be considered a socialist was a political death sentence. Now we find a substantial chunk of the population considering themselves socialist. It's an earthquake in politics."

Rosie Fatta, a University of California Santa Barbara student majoring in environmental studies, said, "Big business interests are definitely affecting our country. Actually, climate justice is what I'm interested in. I believe the fact that he's even talking about that is important because some people are denying that there is global warming. And Bernie is addressing the root causes of it. Capitalism is the root cause of it."

Her brother Matthew Fatta recently graduated from University of New Mexico in business. "There's deep

funding by big oil companies," he said. "There should be more money provided for alternatives to fossil fuels. And we need to stop the corrupt relations between the fossil fuel industry and government."

When a WSWS reporter raised the danger of war that none of the politicians is discussing, he said, "I don't agree with war. The politicians are all saying that the enemy is China, but they're still human beings like us."

Raymok Ketema from University of California Santa Barbara rejected the efforts to line minorities up behind Clinton, "I support Bernie Sanders because he has spoken out against the classism of this system," he said. "Some people criticize him, saying he doesn't address the racism in this country. But classism is racism."

A retiree from the Navy said, "What's wrong with socialism? It's a necessity. There are over 300 million people in this country, and capitalism doesn't work for us." He said he had served overseas in the South China Sea and the Philippines during the Second World War. He discussed with the WSWS that those same areas are today flashpoints in Obama's provocations against China.

On the war danger, he said, "This is the only country that has ever dropped atomic bombs. Not even the Soviet Union had one then. Is that something to boast about? I think the biggest problem for the working class is ignorance. It makes them malleable."



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