

Clinton's speech at Temple University: A desperate appeal to young voters

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Hillary Clinton delivered a speech yesterday at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the hopes of shoring up political support in the face of a sharp drop in the polls among younger voters. Her speech combined demagoguery, empty promises and emotional appeals. She attempted to obscure her own pro-business and pro-war record by appealing to identity politics.

Above all, a consistent theme throughout her speech featured the desperate attempt to influence young people planning to vote for a third-party candidate by presenting herself as the only alternative to the right-wing politics of billionaire demagogue Donald Trump.

Borrowing from the playbook of her defeated challenger, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, Clinton made a few passing references to social inequality, a subject that the favorite candidate of Wall Street usually ignores. "It's wrong to let income inequality get even worse," she said. "We have to make the economy work for everyone, not just those at the top." To do this, she calls for meager proposals of "raising the minimum wage" (to what amount is not specified) and establishing equal pay between men and women.

She attempted to appeal to the anti-war sentiment among young people by portraying Trump as the more bellicose candidate: "[I]t's wrong to put a loose cannon in charge who could start another war. We should work with our allies to keep us safe." This statement, however, is also pro-war. The US and its allies are currently building toward a major military clash with Russia and China.

Clinton then unveiled a plan for higher education reform which ostensibly would make in-state public universities tuition-free for students from households earning less than \$125,000 a year and allow for more lenient conditions on the repayment of student loans.

Though the plan will likely cost around \$350 billion, the Clinton campaign has not outlined what measures will be taken to finance it—suggesting that her administration would have no real intentions on following through with it. Given that Clinton fully expects the Republican Party to retain control of the House of Representatives, any such plan would be dead on arrival anyway, giving her the necessary excuse for inaction.

The plan also includes a measure to introduce tax credits to "encourage companies to offer paid apprenticeships." Rather than constituting a progressive feature, this would further entrench the growth of low-paid internships as one of the only options available for young people to start a career.

In essence, Clinton's "jobs program" appears indistinguishable from Republican proposals. In an interview on Fox News in late July, Clinton reassured the establishment wing of the Republican Party that such a program was "going to be public/private sector. I mean, I'm looking for ways to start an infrastructure bank, seed it with federal dollars, but bring in private investors who want to make those commitments." In reality, this means more corporate handouts and the use of American workers as cheap labor.

She used the racist and xenophobic language of Trump in an attempt to posture as the "progressive" alternative in the election at numerous points throughout her speech. At the same time, she was forced to acknowledge her own deep unpopularity among youth: "I also know that even if you're totally opposed to Donald Trump, you may still have some questions about me. I get that. And I want to do my best to answer those questions."

She then cynically made an appeal to the plight of undocumented immigrants. "When I met a terrified

little girl in Nevada who burst into tears because she worried her parents would be deported,” she said, “it hit me right in the gut. I knew how hard-working her parents were. I knew the sacrifices they were making so that she could have a better life.”

Clinton’s posturing as a defender of the rights of undocumented immigrants is particularly outrageous. She was a central figure in the Obama administration, which has presided over a mass deportation policy that deported undocumented immigrants at the fastest rate in American history, including tens of thousands of small children.

Clinton herself, one might add, is directly responsible for the current instability in Central America. In 2009, Clinton played a central role in the coup that overthrew President Manuel Zelaya of Honduras, resulting in a brutal crackdown that forced countless thousands of children and adults to flee the country, many to the United States. In her autobiography, she openly boasted of her “plan to restore order in Honduras ... which would render the question of Zelaya moot.”

In a debate with Sanders last March, Clinton openly defended her record of cracking down on undocumented immigrants and militarizing the US-Mexico border. “Well, I think both of us, both Senator Sanders and I, voted numerous times to enhance border security along our border,” she said. “We increased the number of border security agents. We did vote for money to build a fence ... And the result is that we have the most secure border we’ve ever had.” During the same debate, she spoke in favor of creating a “guest worker” program in which immigrant workers would be used as low-wage, second-class citizens within the framework of a “legal” process.

She ended her speech by making a desperate appeal to young voters to line up behind her campaign, while admonishing those who might abstain rather than be forced to choose between the political monsters offered by the two-party system: “We need everyone off the sidelines. Not voting is not an option. That just plays into Trump’s hands. It really does.”



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