

Following meeting, leading Black Lives Matter activist endorses Clinton

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Two prominent leaders of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, DeRay McKesson and Brittany Packnett, met privately with presidential candidate Hillary Clinton last Friday in Cleveland, Ohio. Following the meeting, Packnett endorsed Clinton in an online interview published in *Elle* magazine.

The meeting and subsequent endorsement express the deepening political collaboration between the Democratic Party establishment and the official Black Lives Matter movement. It follows a meeting the three had roughly one year before.

There is mass opposition to escalating police violence in the United States, which coincides with popular hostility to both political parties, especially among young people. A section of the ruling class is seeking to channel this anger along racial lines and away from a class-based opposition to the political establishment and the capitalist system. The Democratic Party is utilizing BLM, which speaks for a section of the upper middle class, for this purpose.

In her endorsement, Packnett expressed the fear that young workers and students were breaking entirely with the political system. “There is an even younger generation of activists than me. ... I am worried they feel beat up and disenfranchised and may not show up to vote at all in November. I worry about young people feeling utterly disrespected by their nation. ... I knew I couldn’t look at myself in the mirror if I didn’t stand up and do what I could do now to encourage young people to vote in this election.”

Packnett’s endorsement interview in *Elle* is aimed at deceiving a younger generation of black workers and students who have seen their living standards decline under Obama, the country’s first black president, into thinking that the Democratic Party represents their interests.

“Secretary Clinton can protect the important, though imperfect, steps taken by the Obama administration to improve equity in criminal justice, education, and health care,” she told the interviewer. In fact, Obama has presided over a historic transfer of wealth to the rich and the continued militarization of the police, which kill more than 1,000 people every year.

Packnett also told *Elle* that she had “[come] to see and understand Hillary’s personal story more.” Packnett told *Elle* that watching a video of Hillary Clinton discuss her experiences as a young female law student changed the way she thought about her. “As a fairly young woman in positions of authority, I have been in a lot of spaces where men wouldn’t speak to me.”

This statement is revealing. Packnett solidarizes herself with Clinton on the basis that they are both seeking or have acquired “positions of authority.” It should be noted that Packnett is one of the vice presidents of the large and well-funded Teach for America organization, which has been used to undercut teachers’ pay and benefits and promote the privatization of public education.

According to *Glassdoor*, the average salary for Packnett’s position is \$137,000 a year. That would put her well beyond the \$106,000 a year needed to be in the top 1 percent of millennial income earners.

DeRay McKesson also met with Clinton on Friday, but did not officially endorse her. However, he left no ambiguity as for whom he was voting. Speaking in San Diego this September about concerns over Clinton, he said, “You should have concerns. But this is not about the lesser of two evils. There is one evil,” i.e., Donald Trump.

Alicia Garza, another leading member of Black Lives Matter and one of its founders, also spoke to *Elle*

briefly on the phone. She said that she was voting for Clinton. This comes after previously saying she would never support Clinton or vote for her. Garza said, “I voted early. I voted for Clinton, but I don’t support Clinton ... even as I recognize the difficult challenge we face regarding the need to halt Donald Trump. I respect the choices others feel they must make in this environment. I believe we must ask ourselves what it takes to make a candidate feel accountable to the concrete policy demands of a movement.”

Garza and McKesson’s decision to not officially endorse Clinton is a tactical move. Both will use their position to leverage Clinton into recognizing the BLM movement more, pressing her for policies they have advocated, such as subsidies to black businesses and having more black police officers and public officials.

These policies will do nothing to end police violence or alleviate the conditions facing the vast majority of black workers and youth, but they will help redistribute wealth and power to sections of the African-American upper-middle class.

Clinton expressed the gratitude of these sections of the establishment when she spoke to a radio station after meeting with the two BLM leaders Friday. “I think they’ve played a really important role in our country,” she told Anjali “Queen B” of Tampa’s 95.7 hip-hop radio station. “These young people who came together to raise questions and also offered solutions. It’s not just been one-sided. I’ve met with them, I’ve listened to them. They come up with a lot of important recommendations. I think they’ve played a very constructive role in helping us all to face up to the work that we need to do to confront systemic racism in America.”

Earlier this year the consortium of organizations associated with the Black Lives Matter movement received a \$100 million promise of support from the Ford Foundation—one of the largest and most powerful funds in the world. This flow of money will help integrate BLM’s ties to the political establishment.



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