

# The Latin American pseudo-left in the mirror of the US elections

**Rafael Azul****8 November 2016**

The pseudo-left tendencies that are grouped around the Argentine petty-bourgeois nationalist (morenista) Socialist Workers Party (PTS), and its international front, the Trotskyist Fraction/Fourth International (FT-CI), recently weighed in on the US presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

On October 24, the FT-CI US affiliate, Left Voice, published an on-line commentary entitled “The Bankruptcy of Lesser Evilism” by Robert Belano. Nine days later, the PTS’s on-line newspaper, *Izquierda Diario* followed up with an article by Celeste Murillo titled “Women, Afro-Americans and Latinos could determine the outcome of the US elections.”

Both those articles are in line with the strategy of pseudo-left currents around the world to promote identity politics in order to advance the interests of privileged middle class layers and to maintain workers divided along communal, racial, and sexual lines, just at a point in which workers across internationally, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation, are entering bitter struggles in defense of their living standards and democratic rights.

Murillo’s commentary takes much of its data from the Voter Participation Center, a non-profit group set up by a prominent Democratic Party political consultant.

For Murillo there is no end in how many ways to divide the working class. Employing the most vulgar methods of bourgeois political analysis and the most detailed maps of identity politics, she lists white men and women, unmarried and married women, black men and women, Latinos and Latino subgroups. There is one word that appears nowhere in the article: class. That the United States is a country riven by economic inequality and class exploitation is a closed book to the author.

Instead, under a subheading called “race matters,” Murillo claims that the “racial factor continues to be decisive in [US] elections,” with demographic shifts benefiting Hillary Clinton.

The author attributes the crisis in the Republican Party to the decreasing percentage of “white male voters” in the US population, who, Murillo claims, were the traditional base of the Republican Party (“the time is gone when 90 percent of voters were white, mostly male”).

The subtext, that white males support Republicans and Trump

to defend their supposedly privileged position in society has become a mantra among Democratic Party “progressives” and the pseudo-left. This same outlook is embraced by Left Voice and, effectively, places it in the Clinton camp.

Belano’s article also hinges on identity politics. He compares the political positions of both Trump and Clinton, pointing out that what makes Trump appear as a greater evil is that Hillary Clinton “still relies on the votes of women, Latinos and Black people and cannot and would not” make openly racist and sexist declarations. “Therefore it would be obviously incorrect to put an equal sign between Clinton and Trump,” adds Belano.

Coincidentally, Belano’s commentary was published on the same day that the *World Socialist Web Site* published a perspective with a similar title—“The 2016 elections and the dead-end of ‘lesser evil’ politics.” In that statement, the WSWS makes the point that both capitalist candidates, Clinton and Trump, reflect the terminal crisis of US and world capitalism.

The truth, however, is that the choice of Clinton or Trump is a choice between two forms of terminal cancer. And given Clinton’s support for expanded military intervention in the Middle East and a full-scale confrontation with Russia, the world’s second-largest nuclear power, it cannot be said with any certainty which of the two diseases would prove more quickly fatal.

The WSWS places the issue of lesser evil politics in the context of the crisis and decay of world capitalism and the drive to war by US imperialism that makes this election unlike any other. Under these conditions even the most minimal concession to workers, the middle classes, the poor, or the elderly is completely unrealizable. On the contrary the aim of the ruling class is to strip the working class of all of its hard-fought gains. In this it counts on the assistance of the trade unions and organizations such as Left Voice and *Izquierda Diario*.

Belano and Murillo do not call for a vote for either Clinton or Trump, or any of the candidates running in the election. Both formally reject the “lesser evil” argument. According to Bolano, “[I]t is precisely the Democrats politicians [sic] who will actually carry out the policies that deport immigrants, kill or lock up Black people en masse, and surveil Muslims.” What then is he proposing? A turn to and support for identity politics.

Belano makes a few critical observations about the Republican and Democratic parties and their candidate and advises people not to be fooled. However, he then attempts some fooling of his own by calling on women, workers and youth to build a “workers party” on the basis of petty-bourgeois movements such as Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, and the “Fight for \$15.”

The problem with “lesser evil” politics, according to Belano, is that it “prevents any independent political organization from emerging from progressive mass movements like Black Lives Matter, Occupy, or the Fight for \$15.” By breaking with the politics of “lesser evil” and turning to these movements, a workers party will arise “that challenges the capitalists for power,” declares Belano.

It is a fraud to link the term “independent” to groups such as Black Lives Matter, an upper middle class movement that fully supports the Hillary Clinton campaign. Belano passes over in silence the fact that several organizations playing the leading role in the Black Lives Matter movement have recently been awarded \$100 million in funding from the Ford Foundation, which has long functioned as kind of philanthropic front for the CIA.

The remnants of Occupy Wall Street, a movement that was guided in large measure by anarchist and reformist conceptions, remain firmly in the orbit of the Democratic Party.

“Fight for 15” is a construct of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Hillary Clinton addressed its convention last June in Chicago, when she was posing as a progressive against Bernie Sanders. She would soon distance herself from even the minimal demand for a \$15 minimum wage. No matter, the SEIU bureaucracy endorsed her campaign in November 2015 and continues to do so.

In the last year in the United States, important struggles have taken place by auto workers, communication workers, teachers, transit workers, public employees, entertainment industry workers and others against attacks on their living standards, pensions and health benefits. Workers, native-born and immigrant, across gender and ethnic lines, have been thrown into struggle against their employers, their trade unions, and government authorities, including Democratic Party elected officials.

At a time in which workers are rebelling against the betrayals of their own trade unions, “Fight for 15,” which campaigns to organize fast-food workers on the basis of hunger wages, is committed to keeping workers trapped under the domination of these unions and corralled behind the Democratic Party.

Belano’s support for these movements is, in reality, a back-door support for Clinton and the Democratic Party. He rejects the socialist demand for the independence of the working class from bourgeois parties. To suggest that workers, women and youth turn to those organizations is nothing more than an attempt to divert a growing movement of opposition to capitalism into safe channels of pseudo-left bourgeois politics

along the lines of Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain.

What is also striking about the articles published by Left Voice and on the web site of its Argentine parent organization, *Izquierda Diario*, is the complete indifference and silence in relation to the growing threat of war, which is the most burning question facing the American and international working class. This is in keeping with the attitude taken by other elements of the pseudo-left in the US—the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative, etc.—which are either directly supporting the buildup to military confrontation with Russia, or keeping quiet about it in order not to cut across the essential strategic interests of Washington and the American financial elite.

The line advanced by Left Voice in relation to the US elections is entirely in conformity with the broader political tendency of which it is part, Morenoism. This current is named after its founder, Nahuel Moreno of Argentina, who broke with the International Committee of the Fourth International in 1963, rejecting its struggle for the international unity and political independence of the working class based on a revolutionary socialist program, in order to adapt to Castroism, Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism, in particular the Peronist movement in Argentina.

The principal faction representing this tendency in Argentina today, the PTS, functions as part of a pseudo-left electoral bloc known as the FIT (Left and Workers Front), which is directed not to the mobilization of the working class for the overthrow of Argentine capitalism, but rather to filling the political space left by the sharp lurch to the right of the bourgeois Peronist movement that has dominated the country’s politics for decades.

Ultimately, these politics point to the creation of a “left” government of the Argentine bourgeoisie, posed with similar tasks as those carried out by Syriza in Greece in imposing the dictates of finance capital on the backs of the working class.

In their attitude toward the US elections, the Morenoites only further define this fundamental class orientation.



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