

Mass student protests against Trump election: The way forward

The Socialist Equality Party, The International Youth and Students for Social Equality
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The Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality welcome and support the outpouring of protest throughout the country against the election of Donald Trump.

These demonstrations of high school youth, college students and other sections of young people express a deep hostility to the right-wing and xenophobic policies of a future Trump administration and all efforts to divide the population along racial lines.

In the week since his election, Trump has restated his determination to ban abortions, carry out mass deportations and pursue extreme right-wing policies across the board. Trump's appointment of Stephen Bannon, a figure with direct ties to white nationalist and neo-fascist groups, as his chief strategist makes clear the dangers facing the entire working class. The election of Trump signifies the move by the American ruling class to a policy of authoritarianism and state violence against social opposition.

The sentiments animating the protesters stand in sharp contrast to the response of leading Democratic Party officials who have lined up to wish Trump "success" and pledge their readiness to collaborate with him.

At his White House meeting with Trump the day after Hillary Clinton conceded, President Obama said his "number-one priority in the coming two months" was to ensure that "our president-elect is successful." In his press conference on Monday, Obama insisted that Americans must "reconcile themselves" with a Trump presidency and touted his "cordial discussion" with the president-elect.

Particularly despicable is the response of Senator Bernie Sanders, who has sought to legitimize Trump as a defender of the "middle class," writing in the *New York Times* over the weekend that he wants "to work

with President Trump on those issues where he will in fact work for the middle class and working families of this country."

Such statements fly in the face of what is obvious to millions of workers and young people throughout the country and internationally, including those participating in the protests. Trump will do nothing to serve the interests of working people. Rather, he is preparing an all-out assault on social and democratic rights.

Over the past several days, sensing that the protests are growing, Sanders has adopted a more critical tone, improbably presenting himself once again as an anti-establishment figure. He aims to repeat his role in the Democratic primaries, in which he denounced the "billionaire class" and postured as a socialist in order to keep the growing opposition to the political establishment trapped within the framework of the Democratic Party. By throwing his support to Clinton, the personification of the corrupt status quo, Sanders ensured that the anger and frustration over declining living standards and rising inequality that were motivating broad sections of working people would be captured by the right, ultimately ensuring the victory of Trump.

Neither Clinton nor Obama has even mentioned the fact that Trump lost the popular vote by as many as two million votes. They have not so much as suggested that the historically unprecedented scale of the disparity between the popular vote and the Electoral College result refutes Trump's claim to have a popular mandate for his extreme right-wing agenda.

The response of the Democratic Party to the election underscores a fundamental political fact: Opposition to Trump cannot be carried forward through or in association with the Democratic Party or any of its

factions. This longtime party of American imperialism cannot be changed, reformed or “taken back.” All those advancing such a perspective are in objective political terms working to block the emergence of an independent political movement of the working class.

When he called the election an “intramural scrimmage,” Obama revealed more than he intended: namely, that the Democrats and Republicans stand together—along with Wall Street, the CIA and the Pentagon—against the working class. The Democrats are petrified of the growth of social opposition, which threatens the capitalist system and the ruling class whom they serve. They are more fearful of encouraging and legitimizing popular protest than they are of the consequences of a Trump administration.

This cowardice of the Democrats before Trump and the far right is a continuation of their role in the election campaign. Clinton ran a right-wing campaign based on scandals and warmongering, directed particularly against Russia. She ran as the continuation of the Obama administration, which has presided over eight years of military violence, growing social inequality and escalating attacks on democratic rights.

Throughout the election, the Democrats marketed themselves as a party of “identities,” combining a right-wing program of war and reaction with the promotion of racial and gender politics that serve to divide the working class while advancing the interests of privileged layers of the upper-middle class. Voter turnout for Clinton declined among workers of all races because the Democrats have nothing to offer to working people.

This is because they defend the capitalist system, which is in mortal crisis all over the world. It is the capitalist system that has produced Trump.

Decades of war, austerity and social reaction have fatally undermined democratic processes and produced a society dominated by financial parasitism and political corruption. These are the conditions that have vomited up Donald Trump, the fascistic personification of the collapse of American democracy.

The fight against Trump must therefore be based on the fight against capitalism. That means a fight to unify working people and youth of all races and genders, in the United States and internationally, on the basis of a socialist program. It is not a question of opposing one individual, but an entire social and economic system

that is based on private ownership of the levers of production and the ever-greater accumulation of wealth by the corporate and financial aristocracy.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality are spearheading the fight for socialism. We urge all workers and young people to contact the SEP, join the IYSSE and take up this fight today. There is no time to lose!

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