

The way forward in the fight against Trump

The Socialist Equality Party
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The eruption of mass demonstrations involving millions of people only one day after the inauguration of Donald Trump is politically and historically unprecedented. It is an initial indication of the crisis-ridden character of the new US government and the immense social upheavals to come.

The demonstrations against Trump on Saturday were the largest and most widespread protest marches in American history, involving somewhere between three and five million people in more than 500 US cities. With protests in at least 100 other cities worldwide, they were the first significant internationally coordinated demonstrations since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The sheer scale of the protests points to the immense social anger that has been suppressed during eight years of the Obama administration. The main Women's March in Washington DC drew more than 500,000 people, double the crowd estimate for Trump's inauguration the previous day. The march in Los Angeles may have been even larger, and media estimates placed the New York City march at 400,000 to 500,000, Chicago's at 250,000, and Denver's at 200,000. The global hostility to Trump was expressed in marches on every continent, with the largest turnouts in London (100,000) and Toronto (60,000).

The size of the demonstrations clearly exceeded the expectations of the organizers, which included individuals and groups that are in or around the Democratic Party. The concerns animating those who took part in the protests went beyond the narrow framework upon which the demonstrations were called. Millions of people are opposed to Trump's plans for mass round-ups of immigrants, a federal registry of Muslims, military action far beyond the wars of Bush and Obama, and the gutting of essential programs such as public education, health care and Social Security.

That a Trump government will face mass popular

opposition is undeniable. This makes all the more necessary the development of a clear perspective and strategy to oppose not only Trump, but the social and economic system that produced him.

The incoming administration is the true face of the capitalist oligarchy. Trump is not an aberration in an otherwise peaceful and democratic society, but the outcome of decades of social cuts, growing inequality and unending war, under both Democrats and Republicans.

With Trump, the ruling class is taking off its mask while preparing ever more violent methods to defend its interests both at home and abroad. This is not a government that will change its policies because of protests. It is set on a path of war and repression. The fascistic character of Trump's inaugural address makes clear the character of the political forces it is preparing to unleash.

The only social force that can settle accounts with the capitalist oligarchy is a politically conscious working class, armed with a socialist and internationalist program. To the extent that opposition is not rooted in the working class, mobilized as an independent and revolutionary force, it will be suppressed, dissipated or channeled behind the reactionary policies of the Democratic Party.

The protests expressed the genuine and deeply-felt opposition of millions of people. But the organizers and those who dominated the speakers' rostrums were by and large supporters of the Democratic Party. They sought to subordinate issues of class and economic inequality to questions of identity—gender, race and sexual orientation. While it did not find a popular response, speakers at several of the rallies sought to promote the anti-Russia and pro-war campaign that was the central focus of the Democratic Party throughout the election campaign and has continued in its aftermath.

The implicit or explicit premise of the political forces that led the demonstrations was that there would be nothing to protest if only Hillary Clinton had won. Yet Clinton ran as the candidate of the status quo, the alliance of Wall Street and the military/intelligence apparatus. The Democrats' hostility to any appeal to the social and economic interests of the working class opened the way for Trump's demagoguery and posturing as the friend of workers in devastated factory towns and rural areas throughout the United States.

Whatever the differences the Democratic Party has with Trump, they are over tactics. The fraud of the Democrats' "opposition" was revealed in the fact that Senator Bernie Sanders, who sought the Democratic presidential nomination as a supposed "socialist," voted to approve the nomination of General James "Mad Dog" Mattis as Trump's defense secretary the day before he spoke at the rally in Boston. He was joined in this vote by all but one of the Democratic senators.

Those who oppose Trump today must learn the lessons of the past, and particularly the failure of the mass antiwar protests of 2003 against the Iraq war. This protest campaign was subordinated to the Democratic Party, which provided the votes in Congress to authorize and fund the war, and then diverted into the election campaigns of the Democrats.

What did the victories of the Democratic Party produce? Obama continued Bush's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, instigated new wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen, and began open preparations for wars with both Russia and China. On the domestic front, Obama deported more immigrants than any previous president, supplied military hardware to the police, backed an unprecedented expansion of electronic surveillance, and oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich in American history.

To be effective, opposition to the Trump administration must be rooted in the working class, the decisive revolutionary force in capitalist society. This means linking the defense of democratic rights—including the rights of women, minorities, immigrants and gays—to the fight against inequality, unemployment, poverty, police violence, dictatorship and, most critically, war.

The defense of democratic rights, the fight for jobs and living standards, and the struggle against war: these

are the three component parts that must form the basis of the political mobilization of the working class against the Trump administration.

The fight against Trump is a fight against capitalism and all of its political representatives. It depends on the education, organization and mobilization of workers in every country of the world against a social and economic system rooted in inequality and exploitation—a system that is driving mankind toward catastrophe.

The Socialist Equality Party alone is leading this struggle, in political alliance with all of the sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International. We are entering a period of mass radicalization and unprecedented political struggles. Now is the time to get involved. Join and help build the SEP!



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