# The political issues in the "International Women's Strike"

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On Wednesday, March 8, several organizations are planning an "international day of action" to mark International Women's Day. The groups are calling for women in various countries to take off work, participate in demonstrations, and otherwise protest violence against women and other social ills.

Many who will participate in these and other protests are seeking an avenue to oppose the Trump administration and its reactionary policies. All the more critical is the need to make an analysis of the program, perspective and history of the groups that are organizing the protests.

The most heavily promoted actions are in the United States, involving two umbrella organizations: Women's March, which organized some of the demonstrations on January 21 following Trump's inauguration, and International Women's Strike USA.

Women's March is sponsored by Democratic Party-aligned groups such as Emily's List (a political action committee) and NARAL Pro-Choice America (a nonprofit), both of which endorsed Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election. Major union sponsors that supported Clinton include the American Federation of Teachers and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). MoveOn.org, which has raised millions of dollars for Democratic Party candidates, is also a major sponsor.

International Women's Strike USA is sponsored by a broader array of organizations that also support the Democratic Party. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) is playing a dominant role, along with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), International Action Center, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Solidarity, Socialist Action, the Socialist Party USA and similar organizations. MoveOn.org is the one joint member of both coalitions.

The common political orientation of both groups is underscored by the fact that they are jointly coordinating and cosponsoring each other's actions.

The role of International Women's Strike is particularly significant in that it consists of organizations that use left and even socialist phraseology to tap into a desire among broad sections of the population for a radical social change. However, this verbiage is used to block the development of a socialist movement of the working class opposed to the Trump administration and the economic and political system that produced it.

The program of the group is outlined in an article that appeared in the *Guardian* on February 6: "Women of America: We're going on strike. Join us so Trump will see our power."

The authors argue that the demonstrations following Trump's inauguration "mark the beginning of a new wave of militant feminist struggle." They call for a "feminism of the 99 percent," a "new, more expansive feminist movement," an "anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-heterosexist and anti-neoliberal" feminism,

The call for a "feminism of the 99 percent" is aimed at covering up the basic class questions posed in the fight against the Trump administration. It frames opposition to Trump in terms of gender, as opposition to "patriarchy" and "misogyny," claiming that the basic issue is the oppression of women by men and not the exploitation of workers, male and female, by the corporate and financial elite.

Trump does not represent "men," and the policies he is implementing—the assault on immigrant workers; the attack on health care, public education, the environment and jobs; the destruction of democratic rights; a massive military buildup in preparation for world war—pose life-and-death issues for the entire working class.

The language about a "feminism of the 99 percent," moreover, like the call for a "party of the 99 percent," is deliberately and carefully chosen. It is aimed at obscuring the deep social divide that exists between the bottom 90 percent of the population and the top 10 percent or 5

percent, which includes more privileged sections of the upper middle class.

According to data published last year by University of California Berkeley economists Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, the threshold for entry into the top 10 percent is an individual pretax income of $122,691. For the top 5 percent, it is $184,329.

Over the past four decades, the upper middle class has seen its income and wealth share rise significantly along with the soaring stock market, while the share going to the bottom 90 percent has fallen. Clearly, the concerns of women (or men) in the more privileged social stratum are very different from those of the working class, which faces poverty, unemployment and mass indebtedness.

The groups that comprise Women's Strike USA use identity politics to fight for a more favorable share of the income within the top 10 percent, for greater access to positions in universities and in corporate boardrooms and government. This is entirely compatible with the pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist politics of the Democratic Party.

Here what is not said is just as significant as what is said. Nowhere in the statement or on the organization's web site is there any reference to the Democratic Party, the Clinton campaign, the Obama administration or the conflicts within the ruling class that have developed in the aftermath of the election of Trump.

This is not an accident. While they use somewhat different language, the groups in International Women's Strike USA are just as committed to the defense of the Democratic Party as those in Women's March.

The Democratic Party bears the major responsibility for the rise of Trump. For the eight years following the 2008 economic crisis, the single-minded focus of the Obama administration was to save the banks and preserve and expand the wealth of the financial elite. During the election, the Clinton campaign rejected any appeal to social anger, with the Democrats proclaiming that life had never been better in the United States.

Many of the groups that make up International Women's Strike USA supported the Democratic Party campaign of Bernie Sanders. Sanders' political role was to channel opposition to the "billionaire class" behind Clinton, the candidate of Wall Street. As a result, Trump was able to monopolize hostility to the political establishment and the status quo.

Since the election, the Democratic Party has alternated between political accommodation with Trump (Obama proclaimed after the election that the campaign was an "intramural scrimmage" between two teams on the same side) and denunciations of the Trump administration focused on accusations that it is not sufficiently committed to aggression against Russia. This conflict within the ruling class has nothing to do with the genuine and deeply felt anger of masses of workers and young people over the cabinet of billionaires, generals, corporate executives and outright fascists that Trump is assembling.

Real opposition to the Trump administration must be based on an entirely different program. The fight to defend the social rights of the working class—the right to a job, to health care, to a pension, to an education—is inseparable from a fight against social inequality, war and the capitalist system. The particular issues facing working-class women—including the right to an abortion and opposition to all forms of discrimination—can be addressed only through the mobilization of the entire working class.

The Socialist Equality Party advances a socialist program for the working class in the United States and internationally. The vast wealth created by workers must be taken out of the hands of the rich through the expropriation of the gigantic banks and corporations. Opposition to nationalism and chauvinism must be based on the fight to unify the working class of all countries on the basis of its common class interests.

The fight for this program raises at every point the necessity for the independent political organization of the working class—in opposition to the Democratic Party and all those organizations that serve to maintain the domination of the capitalist two-party system.



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