

Paris youth speak to WSWS: “I don’t want to vote for the right just because I’m afraid of Le Pen”

Our reporters
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WSWS reporters spoke on the presidential elections to two young women, Anna and Zoé, at a protest march in Paris.

Anna said, “We don’t know what to do at all because we are facing someone who is absolutely horrible, Marine Le Pen, who has a racist policy, and on the other side someone else, a free-market person, who we absolutely do not like, either.”

Zoé expressed frustration with the choice between Le Pen and On the March candidate Emanuel Macron: “It’s my first election. Already, I do not feel entirely comfortable with the principle of this election. I find it too bad that this is the only way to participate politically. We need to organize ourselves differently, but that is vague because I absolutely do not know how to create other forms of political organization that are not simply putting a ballot in a ballot box for someone who I am more or less in agreement with.

“I voted in the first round nevertheless, and now I am facing two candidates in the run-off who are dangerous but in two different ways. If Le Pen of the National Front [FN] wins, I will not be affected in the same way as some people whose residency papers will not be renewed. There are a lot of people around me who are in that type of situation, and who rather would prefer voting for Macron, whereas I don’t want to vote at all.”

Anna shared Zoé’s frustration. “You see, the problem we have is that we have been told that our rights and our belief in politics depend on a voting ballot,” she said.

Anna added that she had learned from this election: “Today, I think so many things make clear that we are not really living in a democratic society, because we don’t have much of a choice, the people [candidates]

who are proposed to us all come from a same elite and schools, and the few people who can get elected without coming from that elite are attacked and discredited in the media. So one can’t vote for them, either, it would do no good.

“And so one is stuck in a system where one has the choice between two people, but then one doesn’t really have a choice because we are told that if we don’t vote for Macron, we will be plunged into horror, the horror of the FN, and so we are forced to vote for someone who does not suit us.”

Anna spoke of the unpopularity of both candidates: “I don’t think that even one third of France is in agreement with the idea of Macron and even the other presidents. So, we are stuck with presidents in power who do not represent anyone, or very few people anyway, and above all very privileged people. Of course, I also have privileges. I think that either Macron or Le Pen, in terms of my personal life, would not hurt me. But for me, and my ideas, I do not want that. I want us to be united, and I want to vote for people where I know I will not be ashamed of my country.”

She said she was disgusted with the treatment immigrants received under the Socialist Party government of François Hollande and feared that conditions for refugees would worsen under either candidate.

“When I went to refugee camps in France, I was ashamed to be French, and I know that neither Macron nor Le Pen will do anything for those people, who are in the most desperate want—it’s a vital problem.”

Anna is also concerned with unemployment and growing concerns among workers and youth over wages and work hours. She said, “Even for my future,

there are many people around me who end up working 5 hours a day and not being paid more than 20 hours per week. I do not want to end up like that. But my friends end up like that because they need money. They are not finding any other way to make money, and they end up being paid less than €3 per hour because they have no choice.”

Zoé said she has come under pressure to support Macron: “We don’t know what to do. As my friend said, because I am blonde, with blue eyes and I come from a privileged background, if Marine Le Pen wins, I would not be the first one affected. So I end up all of a sudden maybe not voting for my ideas and being afraid for my friends and even for people I don’t know, but who still are there. And so, I don’t know if I can allow myself not to vote.”

WSWS reporters asked Zoe and Anna whether they believe supporting Macron would stop the rise of neo-fascism?

Anna said, “No, because in Macron’s program there is not a single social measure. There are very few measures for refugees. Shouting ‘stop fascism’ may avoid a situation where Le Pen is elected president, but then one can ask also if it is not those free-market policies that do not give the FN its voters, because they are hurting economically.”

She said the solution to the rise of the ultra-right is not to be found on May 7, regardless of who wins: “In the end, there is no way to do anything in this election with a ballot. We are told that we have to block the FN. But demonizing the FN is just a method to de-demonize everyone else. Simply saying, ‘We don’t vote FN because it is the devil’ is horrible, because of course its true, but it makes you accept everything else. And I find that very problematic, that there is always the FN threat that is used politically by many people.”

Zoé said there were important lessons to be learned from the 2002 elections, when Marine Le Pen’s father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, made it into the second round.

“This made [conservative candidate Jacques] Chirac win a few years ago [in 2002],” she said, “and it is being used by Macron today. I think it is a way to promote people who do not at all correspond to the people by scaring us with someone else, a devil. And so one would be forced to conclude, we will agree to whatever else isn’t the FN, and our idea today is to find another way of doing things. I don’t want to vote for

the right for the rest of my life just because I’m afraid of Le Pen, because that means things will only stagnate.”



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