

The working class and the fight against Trump

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In the aftermath of President Donald Trump's press conference Tuesday, in which he defended those who participated in last weekend's Nazi and KKK rampage in Charlottesville, the president doubled down in his effort to appeal to far-right forces Thursday morning, tweeting his support for the public display of Confederate statues and monuments.

The statues of generals who fought to defend slavery, Trump proclaimed, were "beautiful" and would be "greatly missed and never comparably replaced!"

Trump's response to the Charlottesville violence, and his reaction to the mounting political crisis following Tuesday's press conference, make clear that his administration is pursuing a definite political strategy—of mobilizing far-right elements, including fascists, outside traditional political forms. Over the past several days, he has leveled his denunciations at Democrats and Republicans alike, with particular venom directed at Congressional leaders of his own party.

While there does not yet exist a mass base for a fascistic movement, Trump and his allies within the White House are calculating that they can exploit widespread anger and political confusion to build such a movement.

Obscured and covered up in all the media and political commentary that has followed Trump's press conference is the fact that the central target of this political strategy is the working class, of all races and ethnicities.

The Trump administration is, at its root, a government of the corporate and financial elite. Trump, himself a billionaire real estate swindler, has gathered around him a cabal of oligarchs and military generals who have set out to continue and accelerate the redistribution of wealth to the rich.

The massively unpopular agenda of the White House includes new corporate tax cuts, the dismantling of health care, the privatization of public education, and an assault on Social Security and other entitlement programs. At the same time, the administration has demanded a vast increase in military spending in preparation for world war. Just two weeks ago, Trump pledged to rain "fire and fury" on North Korea, threatening the use of nuclear weapons in the pursuit of US imperialist interests.

Trump's remarks have intensified the political crisis in Washington, with sections of the ruling class concerned that they will severely undermine the credibility of the United States abroad and provoke social opposition at home. However, Trump's critics among the Republicans and Democrats share his basic agenda of war and social reaction.

Indeed, the renewal of criticisms in the wake of Charlottesville has been in part motivated by concerns that Trump's open appeal to fascistic forces, and his attack on Congressional Republicans, will make it more difficult to pass tax cuts and other reactionary measures. Significantly, the stock market, which has soared to record heights throughout the political conflicts over the past several months in anticipation of a new windfall, fell sharply yesterday.

The social and political forces that the media and the Democratic Party have upheld as leading opposition to Trump in the wake of his comments on Charlottesville all share the basic anti-working-class agenda of the administration. Top CEOs from Wal-Mart, Intel, Under Armor, pharmaceutical giant Merck and others have been presented as paragons of democracy for resigning from White House boards, on which they eagerly served for seven months.

Among the supposed champions of democracy are

also included the representatives of the military and the intelligence agencies, including Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley and former CIA Director John Brennan, as well as arch-reactionary Senator Lindsey Graham and former presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

It is to these sections of the ruling class that the Democrats have appealed throughout the past seven months, with their campaign over Russian “hacking” of the US election. The aim has been twofold: to fight out divisions within the ruling class over foreign policy, while at the same time subverting and disorienting working-class opposition to the Trump administration’s reactionary policy. They are terrified of such opposition, because it would pose a threat to the social and economic system that they support.

A critical element in the effort to obscure the basic class issues at stake has been the promotion of racial politics, the insistence that the United States is torn by racial divisions and racial animosity. This has facilitated the rise of the far right, which Trump’s fascist chief strategist Stephen Bannon made clear in an interview with the *American Prospect* this week. “The longer they talk about identity politics, I got ‘em,” Bannon said. “I want them to talk about racism every day. If the left is focused on race and identity, and we go with economic nationalism, we can crush the Democrats.” That is, they can exploit the political vacuum created by the fact that the Democrats have nothing to say about the immense social crisis in the United States, which can be directed along reactionary, nationalist lines.

The efforts of the Democratic Party and its allies to obscure the class questions have intensified in the wake of Charlottesville. Charles Blow, the *New York Times*’ leading proponent of racial politics, writes (in “The Other Inconvenient Truth”) that the Democratic Party “has operated with the ethos of racial inclusion,” while the Republicans have “appealed directly to the racially intolerant.” Behind support for Trump, according to Blow, is a “passive white supremacy” that infects the American people.

Then there is the comment by Princeton professor Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, “No More Charlottesville” in *Jacobin*, published by Bashkar Sunkara, a leading member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Taylor presents the rise of Trump and social

tensions in purely racial terms and says nothing about the attacks on the working class. The words “working class,” “poverty,” “unemployment,” “health care,” “capitalism” and “socialism” do not appear in her article.

The rise of Trump, according to this narrative, is to be explained entirely in racial terms, ultimately as a product of the supposedly inherent racism of the white working class.

Taylor is a leading member of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which is an external faction of the Democratic Party. It is significant that the *New York Times*, the main media voice of the Democratic Party, recently published a comment by Taylor. Along with Sunkara and the DSA, the ISO is being cultivated and brought forward by the Democratic Party precisely as a tool of containing and diverting a movement of the working class.

There are certainly racial issues. The forces Trump is appealing to are deeply reactionary. All the filth of the 20th century is being revived, including racism and anti-Semitism. Everything that has been won, including the most basic democratic rights, can be lost. However, these reactionary forces are being called forth to divide the working class and are in this sense the flip side of the identity politics of the Democrats.

A struggle against fascism must be developed as a working class movement, uniting all sections of the working class. It must be directed against the social and economic system that all factions of the ruling class support, capitalism. The fight against fascism is the fight for socialism. All those who obscure this fact play into the hands of reaction.



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