

Nearly three-quarters of Millennials in the US want a new party

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Last month, NBC News and the University of Chicago conducted a survey of young adults between ages 18-34, known commonly as “Millennials”, which found that an increasing number of young Americans express concern or dissatisfaction with the current two-party electoral system in the United States.

Nearly half of all those surveyed expressed “strong disapproval” of the current Trump administration, while only six percent voiced strong approval of the president. More than half answered with disapproval of “the way Congress is doing its job” and over 60 percent stated that “this country is...on the wrong track.”

When asked “What best describes your feelings about what Donald Trump is doing as President?” 74 percent answered either “concerned” or “scared”, while only four percent expressed excitement. Half of those polled said that Trump will go down in history as “a poor president,” with only six percent predicting that he will be remembered as “a great president.”

Most notably however, when asked “In your view, do the Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people, or do they do such a poor job that a third major party is needed?” an overwhelming majority, 71 percent, answered that a “third party is needed.”

The latest report is further confirmation of the growing radicalization among students and young workers and above all a growing disillusionment among the Millennial generation with the Democratic Party. Confronted with rising inequality, nearly three decades of unending war, and a fascistic billionaire demagogue president, the younger generation is not expecting any viable opposition to come from the Democratic Party.

Selena, an undergraduate at Wayne State University in Detroit, told the WSWs that she was not surprised by the report. “I am a part of the 71 percent of Millennials that would support a third party. I think it is clear to most that

both parties are failing. One of the biggest issues for me is that both parties are overcome with special interests; every issue is driven by money. I think the main problem people have with two parties is that they know the candidates who are put forward are just puppets of larger forces.”

The abandonment of the Democratic Party can largely be explained by understanding the experience of the Obama administration, which was brought to power on a wave of antiwar sentiment among young people and promises of a better future under the slogan of “Hope and Change.”

What the Obama administration delivered was, in fact, the opposite.

After funneling trillions of dollars of taxpayer money to the banks and auto industry; escalating United States military involvement around the world—from Iraq and Afghanistan, under Bush, to Syria, Libya, Somalia, Pakistan and Yemen; constructing the world’s most massive domestic surveillance apparatus and persecuting whistleblowers; killing tens of thousands of innocent people with an illegal drone program and openly authorizing the assassination of US citizens; overseeing the largest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in history, it should come as no surprise that large segments of youth and students became disillusioned with the empty rhetoric of the Democratic Party.

Asked about why she opposed the Democratic Party, Selena criticized, above all, the foreign policy of the Obama administration. “The Obama administration oversaw the murder of Gaddafi which was orchestrated by Hillary Clinton. I think Hillary Clinton is a really bad example of what should be considered ‘left.’ I mean yes, a progressive women president might sound nice but does it matter if she is a woman if she is demonizing layers of the population and pushing for things like the industrial prison complex?”

Speaking about the conditions facing youth, Selena explained that after eight years with Obama in power most Millennials find themselves living “in a very precarious state. Many students I know are homeless and the others are at risk of being homeless. They don’t know what they will do to live from one month to the next. Most of my friends are at minimum wage jobs. Some jobs that require a bachelor’s degree nowadays only pay \$12 an hour which is really not even \$25,000 a year before taxes.”

The devastating effect of the “Obama experience” was most conclusively illustrated in the 2016 election. In Hillary Clinton, workers, youth, and students, like Selena, saw a continuation and intensification of the pro-war and pro-corporate policies of the Obama administration. Unlike Obama, Clinton did not even give the pretense of being an anti-establishment or anti-war candidate but rather campaigned openly as the candidate of war and Wall Street. Clinton’s campaign strategy was distinguished by her relentless promotion of identity politics and a complete disregard for the working class and the youth.

On the other hand, her competitor in the primaries, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, a self-proclaimed democratic socialist, brought class issues to the forefront of his campaign by railing against “the billionaire class” and calling for a “political revolution.” The *World Socialist Web Site* explained from the outset of his campaign that Sanders, despite his populist rhetoric, was neither a socialist nor an independent, but a liberal apologist for an increasingly right-wing Democratic Party dispatched to redirect the leftward movement of workers and youth.

To the surprise of the Democratic Party and Sanders himself, millions of young people, seeing no future for themselves under the present system, sought an alternative to the big business politics that have dominated political life in the United States, and were attracted to Sanders’ promotion of class-based questions and his identification as a socialist.

That the nominal “socialist” Sanders was able to garner the support of some 13 million voters in the primaries was an indication, not of confidence in the Democratic Party, but instead an indictment of the party’s decades-long rightward shift. And, in the end, Sanders’ thirteen million supporters watched as he worked hand over foot to channel mass social discontent back into the dead end of the Democratic Party, which was completed by his full-throated endorsement of Hillary Clinton.

Eleven months into the Trump presidency, workers and youth face increasingly worsening conditions of life. Trump’s ultra-right cabinet is leading a full-on assault on living standards in the US with Congress passing massive corporate tax cuts.

Under these conditions Kahuk, a student at University of California in Berkeley, told the WSWS that he was deeply troubled by the prospects for youth and students in the world today.

“It is troubling to know that I’m entering a workforce where democratic rights have already largely been taken away. And that I’m part of a system that I didn’t really have any consent over, paying for debts that I didn’t really have any choice but take, but trying to enjoy school at the same time.” He added, “My life is inherently political because it feels like every decision I’m making is because of a system that was completely out of my control.”

When the WSWS asked Selena what she thought of prospects for the future she said she was confident that things could change, “There is a lot of unrest and discussion going on right now, particularly among young people. I think the youth are poised and ready to move the world.”

As more and more young people are beginning to realize, the solution to the crises of capitalism—concentrations of unimaginable wealth into fewer and fewer hands, more than a quarter-century of unending war, and the bolstering of far-right forces around the world—will not be found in either of two parties of Wall Street and the Pentagon, nor the pro-capitalist Green Party or the whole host of pseudo-left parties who supported Jill Stein, Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election. The present situation requires a party that bases its program scientifically on the objective lessons of history. That party is the Socialist Equality Party and its youth wing, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.



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