

Australian pseudo-left promotes Labor Party, Greens at “African gangs” rally

Our reporters
13 February 2018

The pseudo-left organisation Solidarity organised a rally in Melbourne last week, purportedly to oppose a racist government-media campaign against so-called “African gangs.” The real agenda, however, was to promote the Greens and trade unions, and to cover up the Labor Party’s role in the scapegoating of working class youth of African background.

The demonstration, held February 4, was attended by about 300 people, with what appeared to be only a small minority of African origin. Solidarity, a group affiliated with the British state capitalist Socialist Workers Party, provided a platform for the Greens and the trade unions. The speakers pushed an amalgam of identity politics and Australian nationalism, and encouraged illusions in the parliamentary establishment and police.

Chairing the demonstration, Solidarity’s Jasmine Ali opened the event by declaring that the racist campaign had been “led by the Liberal government federally and has been backed by Mathew Guy, the state Liberal opposition leader in Victoria.”

In focussing on the Liberals, Ali deliberately obscured the role of the Labor Party. Federal opposition Bill Shorten has gone along with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s attempt to stoke racist hysteria about “African gangs,” criticising the government only for not allocating more funding to the Australian Federal Police.

The state Labor government in Victoria has allocated an unprecedented \$2 billion in additional police funding, expanding the number of officers by 20 percent, while at the same time implementing a series of anti-democratic “law and order” measures that especially target young people, including imprisoning child offenders in adult prisons.

Ali introduced Richard Deng of the South Sudanese

Community Association, who began by declaring: “I’d also like to appreciate what the Victorian police are doing. A lot of people don’t really recognise what the Victorian police are doing, especially politicians ... So thank you to Victorian police.”

His statement underscores the contempt of a layer of self-styled “African community leaders” for the experiences of youth in Melbourne’s working class suburbs, who confront racial profiling, harassment, abuse and violence at the hands of the police.

The purpose of identity politics, promoted particularly by the pseudo-left, is to push the fiction that there is a unified African community and to subordinate African workers and youth to figures like Deng. In reality, a class gulf divides the many factory and warehouse workers in suburbs like Tarneit, Truganina, and Werribee, and the handful of unelected, middle class “community leaders,” promoted by the political and media establishment.

Deng’s effusive tribute to the police evidently provoked some nervousness among the pseudo-left. Ali afterwards declared that it was “important to remember that levels of racism are escalating even under our own state government.” She issued a perfunctory criticism of police racial profiling and the state Labor government’s \$2 billion police expansion.

The very next speaker, Matt Kunkel of the Victorian Trades Hall Council demagogically denounced the Liberal Party, declaring: “Now it is up to us to come together and call the political price on this type of racist speech.” In other words, vote Labor in upcoming federal and state elections.

Before leading the march to the state Liberal Party office headquarters, the pseudo-left introduced the Greens’ Samantha Ratnam, a member of the Victorian upper house of parliament. Her address combined

identity politics with crass parliamentarianism. “I can’t wait for the day that our parliament across this country looks more like all of you than what we see in Canberra at the moment,” she declared. “So, let’s work to change the parliament at every level of representation across this country ... Let’s get those Liberals out, let’s get all of you into our parliament.”

In other words, far from addressing the social and political concerns facing African workers and youth, the gathering was little more than an election rally for the Greens and Labor. A new Greens-backed Labor government at the federal level, like the last one, would undoubtedly continue the punitive and oppressive policies of the Liberals towards refugees and immigrants, as well as support law-and-order policies at the state level.

The entire rally was aimed at blocking the emergence of an independent movement uniting workers and young people of all races and nationalities, on the basis of a socialist perspective, as fought for by the Socialist Equality Party. (See: “SEP forum rallies opposition against racist ‘African gangs’ campaign in Australia”)

The authors also recommend:

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[16 January 2018]

Australian workers, youth speak out against witch-hunt over “African gangs”

[13 January 2018]

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[5 January 2018]



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