

In defense of the Red Hen

Andre Damon
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On Friday, the owner of the Red Hen, a restaurant in Lexington, Virginia, asked White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders to leave her establishment after employees objected to serving her.

The event followed an incident Tuesday in which a group of demonstrators chanted, “If kids don’t eat in peace, you don’t eat in peace!” as Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen was having dinner in a Washington, DC restaurant. Two days later, the right-wing ideologue and White House adviser Stephen Miller was denounced as a fascist by a patron at another restaurant.

These incidents reflect an outpouring of revulsion and horror among millions of Americans at the Trump administration’s policy of separating refugee children from their parents, a practice condemned as torture by the United Nations. Hundreds of thousands of people have donated to a fundraiser in support of the victims, setting a new Facebook record, and demonstrations against the cruel and barbaric practice have been held throughout the country.

No doubt, the employees of the Red Hen, as well as its proprietor, felt genuinely disgusted to be in the presence of Trump’s filthy mouthpiece, who day after day spews lies to justify the president’s criminal policies. They politely told her to get out.

No one would claim that these individual actions represent a strategy for fighting Trump, but they reflect vast and intense social anger, not just over the inhuman treatment of impoverished refugees, but against inequality, war, the militarization of society and attacks on democratic rights.

This is why, amid general sympathy and support for the Red Hen among the American people, the response of the Democratic Party and the corporate media has been to subject its owner and employees to pompous and hypocritical lectures about “civility.”

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (Democrat

from New York) took to the Senate floor Monday to declare, “No one should call for the harassment of political opponents. That’s not right. That’s not American.”

Democratic House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi denounced “harassment” of Trump officials as “unacceptable,” and declared that “we must conduct elections in a way that achieves unity.”

The *Washington Post* likewise weighed in with a reprimand, publishing an editorial stating that while “passions are running high... Ms. Huckabee... should be allowed to eat dinner in peace.” It added, “Those who are insisting that we are in a special moment justifying incivility should think for a moment how many Americans might find their own special moment.”

Another column in the *Post* complained that Trump cabinet members were being harassed by “mobs.”

What accounts for the Democrats’ sudden concern for the sensibilities of Trump and his associates?

For the past two years, the Democratic Party, the *Post* and the *New York Times* have been waging a factional war against Trump centered on allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 US election and collusion by the Trump campaign with Moscow. A special counsel has been appointed, Trump’s former campaign manager has been jailed, and his lawyer’s office and home have been raided by the FBI. For good measure, the press has thrown in sex scandals regarding porn stars and call girls. No accusation has been too disgusting to air, in keeping with the nature of the conflict—a palace intrigue centered on disputes over foreign policy within the ruling elite.

This anti-Russia, anti-Trump campaign, while resonating with sections of the political establishment and the affluent upper-middle class, has left the general population cold. But now, the anti-Russian narrative has suddenly been superseded by mounting popular anger over real crimes committed by the Trump

government: the torture and imprisonment of children; the construction of concentration camps; threats to dispense with due process.

The Democrats have denounced the protests against Trump's accomplices because they are instinctively hostile to any form of spontaneous popular anger that cannot be channeled along reactionary lines that are harmless to capitalism. On fundamental policy issues—militarism and war, austerity, attacks on democratic rights—there is little that separates the two parties. In fact, as Trump correctly notes and former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson acknowledged on Sunday, immigrant children were separated from their families and jailed under Obama.

The Democrats and Trump speak for different factions of the criminal financial oligarchy that dominates American society.

After Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters called for protests against Trump cabinet members and aides, she was denounced by both Pelosi and Schumer. Within 90 minutes of Pelosi's disavowal of Waters, Trump posted a tweet declaring:

"Congresswoman Maxine Waters, an extraordinarily low IQ person, has become, together with Nancy Pelosi, the Face of the Democrat Party. She has just called for harm to supporters, of which there are many, of the Make America Great Again movement. Be careful what you wish for Max!"

There is no doubt that the Trump administration was taken aback by the visceral public outcry against the separation of children and parents at the border, which led Trump to promise to end the policy. But by denouncing Waters, the Democrats gave Trump the opportunity to go on the offensive once again, rallying his fascistic, extra-parliamentary power base—the "Make America Great Again Movement"—in a threat against a member of Congress.

The entire episode demonstrates certain undeniable realities about American politics. No matter how bitter the divisions between Trump and his factional opponents within the ruling class, they are all involved in what former President Obama called an "intramural scrimmage." On issues of fundamental class importance, including the ability of the state to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity with impunity, all factions of the ruling elite are united against the working class.

While Trump makes use of every opportunity to whip up his fascistic base, the Democrats live in perpetual fear that a movement will develop from below centered not on their pet issues of sex and war policy, but on revolutionary issues.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained last June in its statement "Palace coup or class struggle: The political crisis in Washington and the strategy of the working class," the opposition to Trump within the state and the opposition to Trump within the population are entirely different movements, one from above and the other from below, with radically different methods, aims and intentions.

To the Democrats' methods of palace coup must be counterposed the methods of the class struggle. The only way to fight the Trump administration's warmongering and its assault on social and democratic rights is to mobilize the working class on the basis of a socialist strategy aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system, of which Trump is a noxious expression.



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