

New York Times tries to shame “disillusioned young voters” into supporting the Democrats

Barry Grey
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In the run-up to the November 6 midterm elections, the efforts of major media outlets to convince people to vote for the Democrats are intensifying. The Democrats and their allies on Wall Street and within the national security establishment are desperate to drive up the turnout on Election Day, particularly among young people who are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates.

Critical allies in this effort are the various pseudo-left organizations, led by the Democratic Socialists of America. A handful of DSA members who have won Democratic primaries in races for Congress and other offices, such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in New York, are being touted by the *New York Times* and other pro-Democratic media as supposed proof that the Democratic Party represents a “progressive” alternative to the Republicans.

An example of the media campaign to hustle votes for the Democrats is a column posted Wednesday on the *New York Times*’ website by the prominent advocate of identity politics Roxane Gay. Headlined “You’re Disillusioned. That’s Fine. Vote Anyway,” the piece is pitched to “disillusioned young voters” who believe that voting for either of the two corporate-controlled parties is a dead end.

Gay, a professor and best-selling author, acknowledges that conditions for young people in America are grim, while remaining silent on the responsibility of both parties, and the eight years of the Obama administration, for this situation.

She admits that the Democrats give little reason for enthusiasm, but then attempts to shame people disgusted by the right-wing policies of both parties into voting for the Democrats, reserving particular ire for those voters in 2016 “who chose third party candidates who had no chance of winning the presidential election but were still able to affect the outcome in key states.”

Gay cites the events of the previous week—the mail bombs sent to Democrats, the murder of two blacks by a gunman in Louisville and the shooting rampage that killed 11 people at a Pittsburgh synagogue—and the role of Trump’s anti-immigrant agitation in inciting right-wing violence, to denounce “voter disillusionment” as “incredibly selfish and shortsighted.”

She adds: “If you remain disillusioned or apathetic in this climate, you are complicit... If you are feeling disillusioned, get

over it, at least enough to vote and vote pragmatically... Lives are at stake and if you don’t recognize that, you are no better than those with whom you are disillusioned.”

That is, if you do not go to the polls and vote for the Democrats next Tuesday, you are complicit in fascist violence and death.

What is the actual program of the Democratic Party? In regard to the upsurge of fascist violence, the Democrats are downplaying Trump’s responsibility. They are maintaining a criminal and complicit silence on his deployment of troops to the border and his racist agitation against immigrants. They are doing their best to conceal the dangerous implications of the eruption of anti-Semitic violence.

The Democrats are running as a party of war, fielding some 40 congressional candidates with backgrounds in the military, intelligence or State Department and denouncing Trump for being insufficiently aggressive in the war for regime-change in Syria and the conflict with Russia. Their hysterical anti-Russia campaign strongly suggests that had Clinton been elected, the United States would already be at war with Russia. Such a conflict between the two biggest nuclear powers in the world could rapidly escalate into a conflagration that would kill millions.

Lives are at stake here too, though, of course, Gay and the *New York Times* do not want to talk about it.

The Democrats are also in favor of authoritarianism and attacks on democratic rights. They just go about it in a different way. While Trump seeks to prepare for dictatorship by cultivating an extra-constitutional far-right movement, the Democrats promote authoritarian rule by promoting the FBI, the CIA and the military and leading the campaign for internet censorship. Their response to the eruption of far-right violence last week is reflected in the headline of the *New York Times*’ October 30 front-page lead article: “With Growth, Social Media Spreads Harm.”

The basic content of the Democrats’ domestic economic policy is virtually indistinguishable from that of the Republicans. They support a pro-corporate agenda and the continued transfer of wealth from the working class to the corporate oligarchy. That is why in the election campaign they are saying next to nothing about Trump’s tax cuts for the rich

and attacks on social programs such as food stamps and Medicaid.

The so-called “progressive” Democrats promoted by the DSA and other pseudo-left organizations—such as Bernie Sanders, Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams, congressional candidates Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ayanna Pressley—offer minor reforms, such as a \$15 minimum wage and “Medicare for all,” which will never be passed by Congress, and even if they were, would do nothing to alter the vast concentration of wealth at the very top.

Even these measures are opposed by the Democratic Party leadership. Should the Democrats capture control of the House of Representatives in the November 6 election, they will continue and, if anything, escalate their lurch to the right. This was spelled out by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi in an interview with the *Times* published on Wednesday.

The newspaper cites Pelosi as saying that a Democratic-controlled House will seek to “show voters that Democrats are a governing party, not the leftist mob that Mr. Trump describes—and to extend an arm of cooperation to the president after an electoral rebuke.”

Pelosi and “her deputies,” the *Times* writes, “sought to project a more modest and politically popular agenda on issues ranging from health care to criminal justice changes. They said they would work to improve the Affordable Care Act, for example, rather than rushing to replace it with a single-payer health care plan.”

“Then there is the challenge,” the *Times* writes, “of reining in the most energized liberal lawmakers for whom anything short of a presidential impeachment would be a compromise too far.”

Pelosi’s deputy in the House, Steny Hoyer, sums up the right-wing policies of the Democrats, declaring: “His [Trump’s] objectives are objectives that we share. If he really means that, then there is an opening for us to work together.”

So much for the moral imperative of voting for the Democrats to stop Trump! As Obama said following Trump’s election, the Democrats and Republicans are “on the same team” and their differences amount to an “intramural scrimmage.” They are on the team of, and owned lock stock and barrel by, the American corporate-financial oligarchy, personified by Trump.

The Democrats are, moreover, politically responsible for the rise of Trump. The Obama administration paved the way for Trump by implementing the pro-corporate (Wall Street bailout), pro-war (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, drone killings) and anti-democratic (mass surveillance, persecution of Snowden, Assange, Manning) policies that Trump is continuing and intensifying. And by breaking all his election promises and carrying out austerity policies against the working class, Obama enabled the billionaire gangster Trump to make an appeal to sections of workers devastated by deindustrialization, presenting himself as the anti-establishment spokesman for the “forgotten man.”

This was compounded by the right-wing Clinton candidacy,

which exuded contempt for the working class and appealed for support to the military and CIA and wealthy middle-class layers obsessed with identity politics. Sanders’ endorsement of Clinton gave Trump an open field to exploit discontent among impoverished social layers.

The same process is taking place internationally. While strikes and other expressions of working class opposition are growing and broad masses are moving to the left, the right-wing policies of supposedly “left” establishment parties are enabling far-right and neo-fascist forces to gain influence and power in countries ranging from Germany, Italy, Hungary and Poland to Brazil.

As for Gay’s injunction to vote “pragmatically,” this is a crude promotion of the bankrupt politics that are brought forward in every election to keep workers tied to the capitalist two-party system. “You have only two choices. That is the reality, whether you like it or not.” And again and again, in the name of “practicality,” the most unrealistic and impractical policy is promoted—supporting a party that represents the class that is oppressing and exploiting you! The result is precisely the disastrous situation working people and youth face today—falling wages, no job security, growing repression and the mounting threat of world war.

The Democratic Party long ago earned the designation “graveyard of social protest movements,” and for good reason. From the Populist movement of the late 19th century, to the semi-insurrectional industrial union movement of the 1930s, to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, to the mass anti-war protest movements of the 1960s and the eruption of international protests against the Iraq War in the early 2000s—every movement against the depredations of American capitalism has been aborted and strangled by being channeled behind the Democratic Party.

The central lesson of history is that there can be no struggle for genuinely progressive and democratic change outside of the organization of the working class as a politically independent force. The rise of fascist forces is indeed a serious danger, as is the drive by American and world imperialism toward a new world war. But the fight against these evils is the fight against their source—the capitalist system.

There is only one way forward in the struggle against war, austerity and dictatorship—the independent political mobilization of the working class in the fight for socialism in the US and internationally. This requires a complete break with the Democratic Party and the establishment of the political independence of the working class.



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