

The New York Times' #MeToo smear against Bernie Sanders

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On Wednesday, the *New York Times* published a lengthy front-page article alleging that Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination was rife with sexism and discrimination against female campaign staffers. The article, headlined "For Bernie Sanders, Claims of Sexism in 2016 Campaign Hang Over 2020 Bid," has all the earmarks of a politically motivated fabrication.

It is an amalgam of vague and unsubstantiated accusations, none of them alleging sexual assault or any other form of criminal behavior. For the most part, the actions described are at worst boorish. The accused who are named all deny the charges, making it impossible for the reader to determine the truth of the allegations.

Timed to coincide with the opening of the campaign for the 2020 Democratic nomination, the article represents an effort by the *Times*, which speaks for the dominant factions of the Democratic Party and the forces on Wall Street and in the military/intelligence establishment with which the Democrats are allied, to torpedo a potential presidential run by the Vermont senator. With this piece of yellow journalism, the *Times* is employing the methods it has honed in spearheading the right-wing #MeToo sex witch hunt for the purpose of manipulating the 2020 election campaign in accordance with its reactionary political agenda.

The *World Socialist Web Site* gives no political support to Sanders, a fake "socialist" demagogue whose activities are devoted to channeling working-class opposition to social inequality and war back behind the Democratic Party. However, the *Times* article is an attack on Sanders from the right. It is motivated by fear of the growth of working-class struggles and the development of class-conscious opposition to the entire political establishment and capitalism.

In the 2016 election, Sanders won mass support by presenting himself as a socialist and basing his primary campaign on an appeal to class issues—wages, jobs and hatred of the corporate-financial oligarchy. While Sanders' aim from the start was to serve as a lightning rod for growing anti-capitalist sentiment and prevent it from breaking free of the two-party system, summed up by his

endorsement of the favored candidate of Wall Street and the CIA, Hillary Clinton, the ruling class was shocked and horrified by the scale of Sanders' popular support, as was Sanders himself.

Under conditions today of a convergence of economic and geopolitical crises and the greatest crisis of class rule in the US since the Civil War—and amidst a resurgence of the class struggle in the United States and internationally—the *Times* is determined to banish anything from the 2020 campaign that might arouse the seething anger of workers and young people. It wants the next Democratic campaign, like the last, to be dominated by the politics of gender, race and sex—not class. In this it reflects the concerns that dominate the right-wing, affluent, upper-middle-class layers that constitute its broader constituency beyond the corporate oligarchy and the military/intelligence apparatus.

Hence the attack on Sanders, utilizing the witch-hunting methods of #MeToo that have been employed against dozens of film and television celebrities, actors, artists, musicians and politicians.

The article follows a by now familiar pattern. It begins by citing one specific incident—the only concrete example of sexual misconduct in the entire piece—around which it attempts to construct a picture of pervasive sexual harassment and discrimination.

It cites an interview with the *Times* in which Giuliani Di Lauro, "a Latino outreach strategist" for the Sanders campaign, relates that a "campaign surrogate" for Sanders harassed her while the two were driving to events ahead of the Nevada Democratic primary in February 2016. The "surrogate asked to touch her hair," the newspaper reports. "She consented, but she said he ran his hand through her hair in a 'sexual way' and continued to grab, touch and 'push my boundaries' for the rest of the day."

Di Lauro complains that a manager on the Latino outreach team laughed off the incident when she reported it to him and did nothing about it, a charge the manager denies. Her own politics are indicated by a post on her Facebook page in which she refers to the much-publicized White House

meeting of Democratic congressional leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer with Trump last month and calls it “infuriating” that Trump spoke over Pelosi but let “Shumer” [sic] speak.

The *Times* then writes that “Accounts like Ms. Di Lauro’s—describing such incidents as well as pay disparity in Sanders’ 2016 campaign—have circulated in recent weeks in emails, online comments and private discussions among former supporters.” This indicates that the newspaper has been compiling such stories and preparing to publish its anti-Sanders hit piece for some time.

Sanders’ “perceived failure to address this issue has damaged his progressive bona fides, delegates and nearly a dozen former state and national staff members said in interviews over the last month,” the article asserts,” adding, “And it has raised questions among them about whether he can adequately fight for the interests of women, who have increasingly defined the Democratic Party in the Trump era, if he runs for the presidential nomination in 2020.”

Only three other former Sanders campaign staffers who claim to have been mistreated are named in the article, but virtually no specifics are given about the harassment or sexism they claim to have endured. One of them cites as sexual harassment having to stay in a “run-down house” in Chicago in March 2016 and being told to sleep in a room with three men she did not know.

The article makes clear that the *Times* is extending the #MeToo campaign to the 2020 election campaign. It states: “Allegations of sexism surfaced during Mr. Sanders’ campaign in 2016, when many of his male fans were derogatorily dubbed [by whom?] ‘Bernie Bros’ for their aggressive online attacks against female reporters and supporters of Hillary Clinton. But they did not overshadow the electrifying nature of his insurgent challenge.

“Circumstances have changed since then. Mr. Sanders is no longer an outsider, but an established leader who will be held to a higher standard. And regarding the treatment of women, he must now grapple with the effects of the #MeToo movement.”

Indeed, the Democratic Party and the *Times* laid the groundwork for the #MeToo campaign and its extension to the 2020 elections during the 2016 presidential campaign, when they repeatedly sought to inject identity politics issues into the Democratic primaries in order to change the subject from the issues of social inequality being raised with such dramatic effect by Sanders.

Thus, in mid-May, when Sanders was attracting tens of thousands of mostly young people to his rallies and defeating Clinton in the Democratic primaries in Michigan and Indiana, the Obama administration issued an executive order requiring all public school districts in the country to

permit transgender students to use the bathrooms of their choice. The *Times* immediately seized on this issue—a serious democratic question but one far overshadowed by the growing danger of world war and the brutal social conditions affecting hundreds of millions of working people—and sought to present it as the single most critical issue of the day.

The following month, after Clinton won the California primary and declared herself the Democratic nominee, the *Times* devoted issue after issue and page after page to promoting the right-wing campaign against the judge who sentenced the Stanford student convicted of sexual assault, Brock Turner, to “only” six months in prison. In an extraordinary and entirely inappropriate intervention by the White House into the judicial process, Vice President Joe Biden publicly solidarized himself with the victim and the campaign to punish the judge and impose a harsher sentence against Turner.

And throughout the campaign, Clinton and the *Times* promoted the pro-Democratic Party, racist Black Lives Matter group as a counterweight to Sanders’ rhetoric against the “billionaire class.”

For their part, the Sanders organization and the senator himself issued ignominious apologies in response to the *Times*’ hit piece, once again exposing the fraud of their “socialist” and antiestablishment pretensions.

Jeff Weaver, Sanders’ 2016 campaign manager and current top adviser, told the *Times*: “Was it [Sanders’ 2016 campaign] too male? Yes. Was it too white? Yes. Would this be a priority to remedy on any future campaign? Definitely, and we share deeply in the urgency for all of us to make change.”

Sanders, interviewed Wednesday evening on CNN, told moderator Anderson Cooper: “I’m not going to sit here and tell you that we did everything right in terms of human resources, in terms of addressing the needs that I’m hearing from now that women felt disrespected, that there was sexual harassment which was not dealt with as effectively as possible... So I certainly apologize to any woman who felt that she was not treated appropriately. And, of course, if I run, we will do better next time.”



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