Oppose the Democrats' #MeToo witch-hunt against Virginia Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax

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The Democratic Party is carrying out a #MeToo-style political operation against the lieutenant governor of Virginia, Justin Fairfax. On the basis of unsubstantiated allegations of sexual assault by two women concerning encounters that took place 15 and 19 years ago, respectively, the entire Democratic leadership in Virginia, virtually all of the announced and soon-to-announce Democratic contenders for the party's 2020 presidential nomination, and the Black Congressional Caucus and leading Democrats in the US House and Senate are demanding that Fairfax immediately step down.

Fairfax, 39, a Democrat and an African-American, was elected in November 2017 in a vote that cemented control of the Virginia executive in the hands of the Democrats, with Ralph Northam, the lieutenant governor, succeeding the term-limited incumbent Democrat, Terry McAuliffe, and Fairfax succeeding Northam. Northam is himself facing demands from leading Democrats that he resign over the appearance of a photo of two people, one in blackface and the other in a Ku Klux Klan robe, on his 1984 medical school yearbook page and his subsequent admission that he wore blackface in a dance contest that same year. The next in the line of succession, should both Northam and Fairfax resign, Attorney General Mark Herring, also faces resignation demands after he volunteered last week that he wore blackface himself while a student at Virginia Military Institute in 1980.

Since Friday, when the second woman came forward to accuse Fairfax of rape, the focus of the Democratic campaign has shifted from Northam to Fairfax. The lieutenant governor has forcefully denied the allegations, insisting that the encounters with both women were consensual. He has called for an official investigation and appealed for due process.

Virtually no information has emerged about the second accuser, Meredith Watson, who has made the bald claim, giving no details, that Fairfax raped her in 2000, when the two were students at Duke University. Her lawyers subsequently said she also claims to have been raped by a Duke basketball player the year before.

The first accuser, California Professor Vanessa Tyson, 43, claims that Fairfax forced her to have oral sex in his hotel room during the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston. In a detailed statement released last Wednesday she said that what began as consensual kissing turned to sexual assault. Neither of the accusers reported the alleged crimes to the police or other authorities at the time of their supposed occurrence.

No evidence has been produced to substantiate either allegation. Once again there is the familiar refrain that the woman must be believed, under conditions where in one case virtually no information has been presented and in Tyson's case there is good reason to approach her claims with extreme skepticism.

Tyson is an experienced academic, an associate professor of politics and racial and gender studies at Scripps College in California. She is also a long-time Democratic Party operative. When she met Fairfax in 2004, she was four years his senior and was working on the campaign of John Edwards, the Democratic candidate for vice president.

On her website, she says she has "worked on political campaigns since she was a teenager, including three presidential campaigns, two US Senate campaigns, and numerous state and local campaigns." In one of her columns she says she has worked on Democratic campaigns in Southern California "since I was 12 years old," and that her first post-college job was on the finance staff of the 1998 Senate campaign of Barbara Boxer.

She has authored a book, *Twists of Fate: Multiracial Coalitions and Minority Representation in the US House of Representatives*, published by Oxford University Press.

In recent years, she has shifted her focus to questions of sexual abuse and feminism. She is currently in a year-long fellowship program at Stanford University, an academic hotbed of #MeToo politics, where she is researching "the politics and policies surrounding sexual violence against women and children in the United States," according to the Stanford University Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.

One claim by Fairfax that is relevant to her credibility has barely been reported by the media. He reports that some time after their encounter in Boston, when he was in law school,

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Tyson contacted him and said she wanted to introduce him to her mother.

Tyson evidently began speaking widely about her alleged assault by Fairfax only after his election. She went to the *Washington Post* and at least one other media outlet in 2018 with her story, but they refused to report it because they could not corroborate it.

Nothing that has been presented to date makes a serious factual case against Fairfax. Yet a Democratic member of the House of Delegates has pledged to introduce articles of impeachment against him on Monday. There is no legitimate basis for the impeachment of Justin Fairfax. No criminal charges have been filed. There are no indictments, let alone any judicial process.

The lawyers for the two women accusers have said their clients are prepared to testify at impeachment hearings. This amounts to a pseudo-legal set-up. They know that in such a process the politicians will be terrified of offending the professional witch hunters in the media and the Democratic milieu. There will be nothing like the rigorous questioning of the accusers that would take place in a trial.

In its second year, the #MeToo movement has already led to the purging and blacklisting of scores of artists, musicians, actors, television and film personalities, and others. Most recently, Amazon Studios has refused to distribute Woody Allen's latest film, despite the fact that the filmmaker resolutely denies the allegations against him of sexual abuse of his adopted daughter, and investigations by the New York Department of Social Services and a team from the Yale-New Haven Hospital Child Sexual Abuse Clinic, ordered by the Connecticut State Police, found the allegations to have no credible basis.

Just 14 months ago, the Democratic Party set a precedent of sacrificing its own elected officials to promote its identity politics agenda by forcing out Minnesota Senator Al Franken after he was accused of minor sexual improprieties. The removal of a senator considered among the most liberal in the Democratic caucus, including on abortion rights, shifted the political balance of forces further to the right.

There is a definite political agenda behind the demand for Fairfax's resignation. It is no secret that the Democrats are doubling down on a strategy based on a form of anti-democratic identity politics. Earlier this month, defeated Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams, who gave the official Democratic response to the State of the Union address, authored an article in *Foreign Affairs* defending the Democrats' focus on identity and their repudiation of the "catchall category known as 'the working class.'"

The right-wing character of the Democrats' political operation against Fairfax is underscored by its origins. It is the outcome of a provocation against the Virginia Democratic Party that was launched 12 days ago, when leading Republicans in Virginia and nationally, including President Trump and Vice President Pence, attacked Northam as a supporter of "infanticide" because he gave an interview in which he defended third trimester abortions under certain limited conditions.

The following Tuesday, in his State of the Union address, Trump essentially declared war on abortion rights, making clear that the issue will play a major role in his reelection campaign.

Both the furor over the blackface issue and the sexual campaign against Fairfax were triggered by articles posted by *Big League Politics*, a far-right Republican website run by former writers for the fascistic *Breitbart News*.

There is a long and tragic history of allegations of sexual assault that have proven to be false. A large portion of the black men who were lynched in America were murdered on the pretext that they were guilty of sexual assault. More recently, there was the 1989 case of Tawana Brawley, the Duke lacrosse team frame-up in 2006, the case of "Jackie" at the University of Virginia in 2015, and others.

The FBI's J. Edgar Hoover perfected the use of sex as a tool for blackmail, provocation and destruction against his political opponents, particularly on the left. One can only wonder how Martin Luther King Jr., whom the FBI sought to discredit through revelations regarding his private life, would have fared had he lived in the current #MeToo era.

These are the traditions on which the Democratic Party is basing itself. This latest ugly episode, whatever its immediate outcome, makes clear that the Democratic Party is intensifying its reliance on identity politics and on this basis moving ever more sharply to the right. This is its response to the growth of the class struggle and the rise of anti-capitalist and socialist sentiment among masses of working people. One thing is certain, the Democrats are infinitely more committed to promoting the politics of race, gender and sexual orientation than they are to defending democratic rights, including the right to abortion.

Workers and young people should oppose the Democrats' latest exercise in #MeToo witch hunting and political persecution currently underway in Virginia.

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