Rashida Tlaib defends Democratic Party collaboration with Trump on immigration

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A pro-immigrant rally held last weekend at the Wayne State University Law School in Detroit broke up in confusion after Michigan Democratic Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), was questioned about how the Democratic Party has worked with the Trump administration to persecute immigrants fleeing war-torn and poverty-stricken conditions in their homelands.

Tlaib is one of four freshmen Democratic congresswomen (known in media shorthand as "The Squad,") including New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Minnesota's Ilhan Omar and Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts, who have been elevated by the political establishment and mainstream media outlets as the face of a so-called "progressive revolt" within the ranks of the Democratic Party. Tlaib and her associates have been the targets of President Donald Trump's fascistic rants on Twitter after they voiced criticisms of the conditions at migrant detention facilities along the United States-Mexico border.

The "Immigration 101 for Allies with Rashida Tlaib" rally was hosted by community activist group 1Michigan. It promoted the view, based on the perspective of identity politics, that Trump's unprecedented assault on immigrants and democratic rights is an expression of the racism supposedly inherent within the white population in America.

Despite this, the mood of hostility among workers and sections of the middle class to the right-wing policies of both the Democratic and Republican parties found some expression in the discussion.

Jose Franco, the founder of 1Michigan, spoke at length about the bipartisan assault on immigrants carried out by both Democrats and Republicans. Franco gave a personal account of having met with Democratic Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, who told the young activist that "nobody cares" about the plight of immigrants. He ended his contribution, to audience applause, by declaring "both parties are guilty."

However, the essentially pro-Democratic Party perspective of the event was provided by Tlaib, the main speaker. While the congresswoman made passing references to broader issues affecting the working class, stating "this isn't about the undocumented immigrant community, this is about all of us" and calling the American deportation apparatus a "broken system," her criticisms were framed within the jargon of establishment liberalism; calling merely for a "movement for accountability" for the border and immigration police.

Tlaib said she was also seeking to "humanize" ICE and Border Patrol agents, whom she said had "taken me aside [and whispered] to me" about the conditions at the border camps. "It's also about them, the agents, who are tired of this," she said, adding, "I wanted to humanize them, even though some of them dehumanized me and other members of Congress on their Facebook page." Tlaib was referring to the "I'm 10-15" social media group in which agents had exchanged racist and fascist comments about immigrants and Democratic lawmakers.

Tlaib's appeals for "accountability" and "more training" for agents who are inflicting gross human rights violations on migrants expose both the congresswoman and the DSA, a faction within the Democratic Party, as enablers of the right-wing and authoritarian policies of the Trump administration.

Only two days earlier, Tlaib and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez cast their votes in support of the Republican president's two-year budget resolution, which granted a gargantuan $738 billion to the Pentagon's war

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machine for the fiscal year beginning October 1. The sum was the largest amount for the military in US history. The bill also commits the Democratic Party to dropping any legislative effort to halt the building of Trump's border wall.

When a reporter from the *World Socialist Web Site* asked Tlaib about her support for the Democratic Party, despite its record of deportations and votes to fund the fascistic ICE and border patrol agencies, the congresswoman became apoplectic.

Tlaib falsely claimed that she had not used the rally to call for support for the Democratic Party, before doing exactly that: "Let me tell you, that Democratic Party belongs to all of us. It's like family [when] you have that one person who's just out of control, but you outnumber them, well go outnumber them! Take over your party, sir!" she declared demagogically. "If you want to be independent, be independent, but I'm not ready to give up on the people's party."

Actually, millions of working people have already given up on the "people's party," recognizing that there is no genuine difference between the Democrats and the Republicans, and that both parties represent the interests of corporate America and the Wall Street money men.

Tlaib tried to distract attention from her own vote for Trump's war budget, declaring that no one should "rely on a bill, or what happens in the House of Congress [sic], or in the White House," but that "movements for labor rights or anti-poverty" were fought "on the streets." She then immediately contradicted herself, claiming, "I would rather be at the table… than be somebody on the outside that says, 'Let's all just burn it down.' I'm not ready for that."

Indeed, since the election of President Trump in 2016, the Democrats have been working to prevent just such a movement "in the streets" from developing. The Democrats have been engaged in an effort to trap the mass opposition to the far-right administration behind appeals to "work with" the fascistic Republican, including on funds for ICE and Customs and Border Protection, and by seeking to divert all opposition to Trump's anti-immigrant and fascistic policies behind its anti-Russia campaign.

While Trump himself eviscerates the US Constitution by declaring a national emergency at the US border to mobilize military resources to enforce his anti-immigrant persecution, the response of the Democratic Party is to look the other way, framing their opposition to Trump on the basis of his perceived "softness" against Russia and other foreign adversaries of American imperialism.

Tlaib revealed the real content of her "grassroots" pressure tactics at an address to "activists and grassroots leaders" at Cobo Hall in downtown Detroit only hours before her appearance at the 1Michigan rally. According to the *Detroit News*, Tlaib touted her "outside, inside game, which is so important" in getting the House to vote for a $15 minimum wage bill, which she declared was "an organizing tool for all of us… to get [Senate Majority Leader Mitch] McConnell [to support it as well]." For good measure, Tlaib declared that she "sometimes" felt McConnell "works more for the Russian government than for his own people, but that work doesn't happen without all of you leading the way."

The efforts of "progressive" Democrats such as Tlaib are not to "reform" the Democratic Party, but to disguise the rightward shift of the capitalist system, which Tlaib, the DSA and the entire coterie of "left critics" of the Democratic Party support and will ruthlessly defend in the face of a real movement of the working class.

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