

The nomination of Kamala Harris and the right-wing logic of identity politics

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The Democratic Party concluded the third night of its convention on Wednesday, culminating in the official nomination of California Senator Kamala Harris as the vice-presidential candidate of Joe Biden.

Wednesday's proceedings were in line with the inane and insipid character of the event as a whole. Various reactionaries and multi-millionaires, from Hillary Clinton to Nancy Pelosi, declared the urgent need to elect Biden, the corrupt corporate shill from Delaware recast as a living saint, to right all wrongs and restore America to the path of prosperity and righteousness.

No actual program was advanced to deal with the massive social and economic catastrophe produced by the coronavirus pandemic and the bipartisan response of the ruling class to it. Everything was reduced to the fictionalized narrative of the life of Biden and his comrade in arms, Kamala Harris.

The selection of Harris was presented as a "historic" moment in American politics. This appraisal was based entirely on the fact that Harris is the first African American and Indian American woman selected by the world's oldest political party to run for vice president. There were the inevitable proclamations that young girls throughout the country will conclude from this fact that they too can someday be vice president of the United States of America.

All of this is, if we can be permitted to use Biden's catchphrase, "malarkey." Harris has already proven herself as a trusted servant of the interests of the rich and powerful at the expense of the working class. The *Wall Street Journal* wrote last week that Wall Street financers had breathed a "sigh of relief" at Biden's pick of Harris. Industry publication *American Banker* noted that her steadiest stream of campaign funding has come from financial industry professionals and their most trusted law firms.

Just before she ended her bid for the presidency in December 2019, Harris' campaign boasted the most billionaire backers, including oil fortune heir Gordon Getty and vulture capitalist Dean Metropoulos.

As San Francisco District Attorney from 2004 to 2011, Harris pursued an agenda that included the implementation of a law to fine and jail the parents of truant students for up to a year. As California's attorney general from 2011 to 2017, she warned parents across the state that they would face "the full force and consequences of the law" if their children missed out on too many days of school.

During her tenure, Harris also oversaw California's resistance to a Supreme Court order that it release prisoners from the state's overcrowded prisons. Her attorneys ("for the people," as Harris put it last night) argued in court that releasing too many prisoners would deplete the cheap labor pool of inmates who fight the state's notorious wildfires for less than \$2 a day.

Serving as the junior senator from California since 2017, Harris sits on the committees overseeing the federal budget, the judiciary, homeland security and the intelligence agencies.

Through her position on the Intelligence Committee, Harris has been privy to the most sensitive information about American imperialism's criminal operations all over the world. In this role, she has backed the Democrats' anti-Russia campaign aimed at pressuring the Trump administration into taking a more hostile posture towards Moscow.

She also supports the persecution of WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange, who faces 175 years in a US prison for exposing American military war crimes, declaring that the organization had done "considerable harm" to the US.

While feinting to the left as a proponent of cutting the

Pentagon's \$750 billion-plus annual budget, in July Harris voted against a proposal by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders that would have cut funding by a meager 10 percent, saying she supported the idea but that any cuts to the military should be done "strategically."

Harris represents the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street billionaires, the intelligence agencies and the military. Her nomination Wednesday came just one day after the Democrats paraded a number of Republicans who endorsed Biden, including Colin Powell—the first African American chairman of the joint chiefs of staff and a chief architect of the 2003 war in Iraq—and the widow of the notorious warmonger, Senator John McCain.

Harris' closing remarks at the convention last night were preceded by those of Obama, of which we will have more to say later. Suffice it to say that Obama, the first African American to be nominated by the Democrats and win the presidency, proceeded to bail out the banks, continue the wars of George W. Bush, implement a policy of drone murder, and deport more immigrants than any of his predecessors.

It was the right-wing policies of the Obama administration that paved the way for the ascension of Trump to the presidency.

The Democrats hope that the endless celebration of the trite, empty symbolism of Harris' candidacy will serve as a repeat of Barack Obama's run for president in 2008, deploying identity politics to cover over the right-wing content of her record and that of the Democratic Party. This is the logic of the reactionary politics of racial, ethnic and gender identity, promoted incessantly by the pseudo-left opponents of Marxism.

However, the elevation of an increasing number of women, African Americans and other ethnic minorities into positions of power, from city councils, to mayoral offices, police departments and the presidency itself, has done nothing to advance the interests of the working class. In fact, over the last four decades wealth inequality has grown most rapidly within racial groups, as a small layer of the population has been elevated into positions of power and privilege while conditions for those of all races and genders in the bottom 90 percent have deteriorated.

In addition to Obama, the likes of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, national security advisors

Condoleezza Rice and Susan Rice, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—and, one might add, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and German Chancellor Angela Merkel—have shown that women and racial minorities can pursue the interests of the financial oligarchy as ruthlessly as any other representative of the ruling class.

There is something fitting in the selection of Harris to co-lead the Democrats' ticket. The response of the Democrats to the mass multi-racial and multi-ethnic protests against police violence that erupted earlier this year was to divert them into the politics of racial division, using the reactionary and false claim that what was involved was a conflict between "white America" and "black America," rather than a conflict between the working class and capitalism. This effort now culminates in the selection of the former "top cop" of California as the Democrats' vice presidential candidate.

This is aimed at blocking the emergence of a powerful, united movement of the working class. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the criminal indifference of the entire ruling elite to the lives of the working class. As was shown with the near unanimous passage of the trillion-dollar CARES Act bailout, their concern is for their stock portfolios and corporate profits at the expense of more than 175,000 people who have now died and the more than 5.5 million who have been infected by coronavirus.

The fight to advance the interests of the working class will have to be waged through the methods of class struggle, in opposition to the Democrats and Republicans and the capitalist system which they defend.



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