

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and “bad faith actors”

Eric London
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On Monday, Briahna Joy Gray and Virgil Texas published an episode of their podcast “Bad Faith” defending Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s recent interview with *Democratic Left* magazine. They called parts of the *World Socialist Web Site*’s analysis of the interview “bad faith” and “incendiary,” arguing that it “mischaracterized” the interview and took Ocasio-Cortez’s words “wildly out of context.”

The intervention of Gray and Texas is a sign that the Democratic Party is struggling to contain the fallout over the WSWS exposure of Ocasio-Cortez’s interview. In the pages of the Democratic Socialists of America’s official magazine, the Democratic New York Congresswoman claimed the Democratic Party is being “radically transformed” and called it “privileged” to criticize Biden from the left.

Gray is a prominent figure in Democratic Party circles and served as national press secretary for Bernie Sanders’ 2020 presidential campaign. Unlike Sanders, Gray opposed endorsing Joe Biden in the general election, stating that her goal was to “push Joe Biden into being a better candidate, a more electable candidate.” Gray and Virgil Texas are both DSA members.

Gray begins the March 29 episode by stating that the WSWS’s initial analysis of Ocasio-Cortez’s interview has caused a “big kerfuffle” within the Democratic Party’s left periphery with which they are familiar. “In our circles,” she explains, “it is big news for one of the biggest icons of the progressive movement.”

Acknowledging the broad opposition among workers and youth to Ocasio-Cortez’s statements, Gray says: “If people are reading it that way, it’s not their fault, it’s because Eric London very much frames it that way.” The purpose of the episode, she says, is to “clear all the bad faith stuff out of the way.” She refers to the

“bad faith” arguments of the WSWS several times throughout the episode.

Wikipedia defines “bad faith” as “a sustained form of deception which consists of entertaining or pretending to entertain one set of feelings while acting as if influenced by another.”

By criticizing Ocasio-Cortez from the left, the WSWS is not acting in “bad faith.” We have stated our positions very clearly and openly: We oppose the Democratic Party, we oppose Ocasio-Cortez, and we oppose efforts to present either as the path to socialism.

The bad faith rests entirely on the side of the Democratic Party and its defenders.

For two centuries, the Democratic Party has perfected the art of bad faith deception, waging war and social counterrevolution while presenting itself as a friend of the people. All of capitalist politics is grounded in bad faith. It is the systematic political deception of the masses of people to suppress the class struggle and prosecute the interests of the ruling class.

When Barack Obama declared himself the candidate of “hope and change,” he was acting in bad faith as he prepared to bail out the banks and launch imperialist wars across the world. When Bernie Sanders presented himself as the leader of a “political revolution,” he was acting in bad faith as he maneuvered his supporters behind Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Joe Biden in 2020. When Ocasio-Cortez says she is a socialist, she is acting in bad faith, as her real role is to defend the Democratic Party.

Gray is also acting in bad faith, though in her case it likely falls more on the side of self-deception than by a direct intention to deceive others. Texas is engaged in a lazier type of bad faith, since he attacks the WSWS after acknowledging that he had not even read the interview in *Democratic Left*.

In any case, Gray and Texas fail to substantiate a single claim of “mischaracterization” or the manipulation of quotes.

Gray says the WSWs’s characterization of Ocasio-Cortez’s statement that “class essentialists... deprioritize human rights” is “the most bad faith part of Eric London’s article. This was wildly out of context.” If this is the “most bad faith claim” in the article, Gray should then be able to clearly establish where the dishonesty took place.

The WSWs, drawing upon the long historical roots of the DSA, explained that the association of socialism with human rights violations is a manifestation of the liberal anti-communist character of the DSA.

Gray responds by saying: “In context what she [Ocasio-Cortez] is saying is she has been engaged in her Hispanic, heavily working-class community doing all kinds of works, political works, and that she was skeptical of any number of organizations that seemed to be predominantly white and not actually interested in doing praxis.”

This in no way substantiates the claim that the WSWs took Ocasio-Cortez’s anti-communist statement “wildly out of context.” Instead, it is a weak attempt to re-frame the discussion away from the political consequences of Ocasio-Cortez’s association of socialism with human rights violations to questions of Ocasio-Cortez’s identity and personal backstory.

Gray and Texas conclude by establishing that their orientation to the Biden administration and Democratic Party is fundamentally the same as the orientation enumerated by Ocasio-Cortez in the initial *Democratic Left* interview.

Gray insists there *are* “meaningful advancements that the Biden administration is taking on,” providing cover for Ocasio-Cortez’s lying assertion in the March 19 article that even right-wing Democratic incumbents are “totally reinventing themselves in a far more progressive direction.” Gray adds, “Very few leftists are saying no progress whatsoever will come out of a Biden administration.”

Throughout the episode, Gray and Texas adopt a highly defensive tone. They attempt to raise various criticisms of how Ocasio-Cortez worded certain answers. They are clearly embarrassed that they are forced to defend such a miserable interview, and they are aware of the danger that opposition to capitalism

will break free from the Democratic stranglehold.

The comments section of their own YouTube video shows that they haven’t convinced even their own listeners.

“She [Ocasio-Cortez] is a waste of a nomination,” reads one top comment. Another says Ocasio-Cortez “will do as much as she can as long as she can continue her political career. Just like Nancy Pelosi started.” A third writes, “If the 2020 primary taught me anything, it was that the Democratic Party is willing to fight harder against internal takeover from the left than it will against the Republicans. I’m convinced that trying to achieve change through the Democratic Party is more or less a dead-end.”

By the looks of it, even the audience of “Bad Faith Pod” falls under Ocasio-Cortez and Gray’s definition of a “bad faith actor.” In any case, the hosts have faith in the Democratic Party, while the *World Socialist Web Site* has faith in the revolutionary character of the international working class.



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