

In response to election debacle, New York Times demands Democrats shift further to the right

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The *New York Times*' post-mortem on the Democratic Party's election debacle on November 2 reached an entirely predictable conclusion: The Democrats must shift even further to the right.

In its editorial published on Friday, "Democrats Deny Political Reality at Their own Peril," the *Times* editorial board calls the elections, particularly the defeat of Democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe in Virginia, "a political nightmare for the Democratic Party," which "requires an honest conversation... about how to return to the moderate policies and values that fueled the blue-wave victories in 2018 and won Joe Biden the presidency in 2020."

The Democrats, the *Times* writes, have been "looking left on so many priorities and so much messaging" and "have lost sight of what can unite the largest number of Americans."

It adds, "A national Democratic Party that talks up progressive policies at the expense of bipartisan ideas, and that dwells on Donald Trump at the expense of forward-looking ideas, is at risk of becoming a marginal Democratic Party only appealing to the left."

The newspaper writes further on that Biden "did not win the Democratic primary because he promised a progressive revolution," citing approvingly the statement of Democratic Representative Abigail Spanberger: "Nobody elected him to be FDR. They elected him to be normal and stop the chaos."

The claim that the Democratic Party since the election of Biden has been "talking up progressive policies" is absurd. The complaint of the *Times* centers on the administration's so-called "Build Back Better" social spending and climate legislation. "The concerns," the *Times* writes, "of more centrist Americans about a rush to spend taxpayer money, a rush to grow the government, should not be dismissed."

In fact, the "Build Back Better" legislation has been progressively whittled away to virtually nothing, with all elements not directly related to the interests of the corporations, including the expansion of the pool of cheap labor, systematically removed. In particular, in the course of orchestrated "negotiations" with right-wing congressional Democrats, any measures to tax the rich, which polls show are overwhelmingly popular, have been eliminated.

The *Times* seizes on the Virginia elections to demand that the legislation be further gutted. In response, the Democrats delayed

voting on the bill on Friday, instead moving to pass a separate bipartisan infrastructure bill, endorsed by big business, on its own, as had been demanded by right-wing Democrats such as senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema.

Under conditions of a massive social crisis, a pandemic that has killed more than one million people in the US, growing concern among workers over the soaring cost of consumer goods, anger over decades of escalating social inequality, and widespread disillusionment with both political parties, the *Times* concludes... the Democrats are too eager to "grow the government."

As for the assertion that the Democrats have been "dwelling on Donald Trump" since the inauguration of Biden in January, the opposite is the case. The Democrats have worked to cover up the significance of Trump's fascist coup attempt of January 6, and Biden has made a hallmark of his administration the maintenance of a "strong" Republican Party, as he proclaimed immediately after his inauguration.

The implication of the *Times* editorial is that any remaining investigations into the role of Trump and his co-conspirators in the Republican Party in the effort to overturn the elections and the Constitution should be scrapped—in the name of looking forward.

The fundamental deceit of the *Times* editorial, however, is what it leaves out entirely. The right-wing politics of the Democratic Party are connected to its relentless promotion of racial and identity politics, targeted to privileged sections of the upper middle class. It is this political strategy, bound up with the class character of the Democratic Party, that suffered a shipwreck on November 2.

The *Times* itself has played the leading role in promoting the politics of racial conflict, particularly through its "1619 Project." In a meeting with the newspaper's staff on August 12, 2019, *Times* Executive Editor Dean Baquet explicitly stated that "race and understanding of race should be a part of how we cover the American story... [R]ace in the next year is going to be a huge part of the American story."

That is, the *Times*, speaking for the Democratic Party, would work to place race at the center of American politics. The "1619 Project," unveiled two days later, is dedicated to the falsification of American history, presenting it as a history of unending racial conflict, in which black Americans have waged a solitary fight for democracy against white racism.

What are the issues that preoccupied the Democratic Party prior

to Tuesday's elections?

Last month, the Democrats in New York City removed a statue of Thomas Jefferson from City Hall, on the grounds that it "symbolizes the disgusting and racist basis on which America was founded." The *Times*, in its own account of the decision, declared the statue's removal "part of a broad, nationwide reckoning over racial inequality."

As the *World Socialist Web Site* anticipated, the racist attack on the American Revolution and the Civil War has been a gift to the Republicans and the far right. One year ago, commenting on the factional warfare within the *Times* over the "1619 Project," we wrote :

Working class Americans, black as well as white, draw inspiration from the great and ineradicable achievements of the two American revolutions. They believe human equality is a principle to be fought for and made real, not a "founding myth," as the *Times* sneered. The lynch-mob style attacks on statues of Jefferson, Washington, Lincoln and Grant, encouraged on Twitter by Hannah-Jones, anger and disgust them. Worse, the clear connection of these attacks to the "1619 Project" has allowed Trump and his fascist supporters to posture as custodians of the democratic heritage of the American Revolution and the Civil War.

McAuliffe, a stalwart of the Democratic Party establishment, deployed this strategy in Virginia, focusing the final days of his campaign on demands for fewer white teachers in classrooms, as if this has anything to do with the crisis of public education in Virginia and throughout the country.

Another major campaign prior to the November elections was the Democrats' successful effort to remove its own governor in New York, Andrew Cuomo, on the basis a fraudulent sex scandal. The *Times*, again, played the essential role in soliciting and promoting a campaign that utilized a manufactured scandal to settle scores within the Democratic Party, while elevating issues of sex and gender, another cornerstone of the politics of the upper middle class.

All of this has absolutely nothing to do with the interests of broad sections of workers, of any race or gender. The election in Virginia and defeats suffered by the Democratic Party throughout the country are the product.

As predictable as the utilization of the debacle in Virginia to justify the repudiation of even a pretense of social reform is the campaign to blame the Democrats' defeat on the supposed inherent racism of white workers.

Times columnist Charles Blow, in his own comment on the Virginia election ("White Racial Anxiety Strikes Again") concludes that "Youngkin [the Republican winner] successfully activated and unleashed white racial anxiety." The blame for the Democrats' debacle lies not with the right-wing policies of the Democrats themselves, he argues, but with white workers: "You could argue that the Democrats made missteps in Virginia.

Absolutely. But, to win, Democrats also needed to tamp down white people's fears, which is like playing Whac-a-Mole."

Comments from Democratic Party-aligned figures on social media were even more explicit. "This country simply loves white supremacy," declared Jemele Hill, a contributing writer for *The Atlantic*. "White women voters are the footsoldiers of white supremacist patriarchy," proclaimed Mona Eltahawy, founder of the newsletter *Feminist Giant*, in response to polls showing that a majority of white women voted for Youngkin.

Such people are a million miles from the working class. Never mind that polls show the dominant issue motivating voters in Virginia was the economic situation, with voters who said the economy was not good or poor voting largely for Youngkin.

No, the failure to elect Democrats is, according to the apologists for the Democratic Party, a product of "white racial anxiety."

The working class is not moving to the right, nor is it motivated by racial animus. The defeat of the Democrats coincides with a growing strike movement throughout the United States, including the ongoing strike of more than 10,000 workers at John Deere in Iowa, Illinois and other US states. Deere workers, many of whom are white, voted the same day as McAuliffe's defeat to reject a UAW-backed contract, the latest in a series of defeats of union-supported agreements, including the rejection of three contracts by Volvo Trucks workers in the state of Virginia earlier this year.

The elections also coincide with the ongoing catastrophe produced by the ruling class response to the pandemic, which has killed more than one million people in the US alone. The Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are determined to end all restrictions on the spread of the virus, which continues to kill more than 1,100 people in the US every day.

McAuliffe expressed the indifference of the entire political establishment to mass death when he misstated the level of death in his state from COVID-19 by 10,000, asserting that "4,000 Virginians" had died, when the real toll, according to official figures, is more than 14,000.

The interests of workers find no expression in any faction of the political establishment, whether the increasingly fascistic politics of the Republicans or the race-obsessed politics of the Democrats. As the Democratic Party contemplates its "political nightmare" and shifts further to the right, a wave of class struggle is coming crashing down on its head.



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