

In New Yorker interview, Ocasio-Cortez defends Biden and Pelosi, urges readers not to lose “hope” in reforming two-party system

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On February 14, the *New Yorker* magazine published an interview with New York Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who is also a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

The interview was conducted by *New Yorker* editor David Remnick, author of a hagiographic 2010 biography of Barack Obama and prominent liberal promoter of the Bush administration’s lies justifying the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The purpose of Remnick’s interview, headlined “Is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez an insider now?”, is to promote the New York Democrat’s flagging image as a political outsider with youth appeal. Remnick’s subheadline reads: “After three years in the halls of power, she’s seen the ‘shit show’ up close—and hasn’t given up on her vision for how to change it.”

The interview is a portrait of a conventional capitalist politician.

The interview is most notable for what Ocasio-Cortez did *not* say. In the course of a 6,000-word interview that is largely about herself, she made only one passing mention of the coronavirus pandemic, which has now killed 900,000 Americans, including many thousands of her own constituents in the Bronx and Queens.

She made no reference to the provocative threats made by the Biden administration against Russia, even though the day before the interview was conducted (February 1), the US had convened the UN Security Council to accuse Russia of planning to invade Ukraine, with Biden threatening “swift and severe consequences.”

In the course of the interview, she presents no criticism of the political establishment beyond wishing Biden would issue an executive order forgiving student loans. Instead, Ocasio-Cortez used the interview to defend the Biden administration and Democratic Party congressional

leadership and to guide her audience away from losing “hope” that the two-party system can be reformed.

When asked to rate Biden’s performance as president, she said: “There are some things that are outside of the president’s control, and there’s very little one can say about that,” repeating the Democratic Party talking point that Democratic Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema are to blame for the failure of the administration to pass any social reform legislation to ameliorate conditions for masses of working people.

When asked whether she supported Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House, Ocasio-Cortez replied in typical politician-speak that she opposed any leadership challenge:

“It’s really all about a specific moment that we’re in. We are in such a delicate moment of the day-to-day, particularly with the threats to our democracy.” In other words, Ocasio-Cortez argues that it would be improper to challenge the right-wing leadership of the Democratic Party due to the right-wing leadership of the Republican Party. Whether the “moment” for a leadership change will eventually come is “a larger question of conditions and circumstance.”

Ocasio-Cortez then issued a semi-apology for congressional Republicans, as well. When Remnick asked, “Do you think many Republicans share your concern about the fate of democracy?” Ocasio-Cortez answered, “It’s a complex question because there’s so many different kinds of Republicans.” While “they all make the same decisions,” she argued, “You might be able to appeal to the good natures or even a sense of charity of a handful, but ultimately we have what we have.” She added that “some Republicans struggle with ... a concern that they will be replaced by someone even worse.”

These statements are in reference to a party whose leadership recently passed a resolution declaring that the January 6 coup attempt was “legitimate political discourse.” Ocasio-Cortez cites the danger of the far right as a reason to support Speaker Pelosi and at the same time urges readers to “appeal to the good natures” of the party that is the primary source of that danger.

These answers reveal that Ocasio-Cortez’s role is to quash social discontent and present the two-party system as capable of transformation from within. Remnick at one point asks Ocasio-Cortez about the fact that so many young people have lost hope in the possibility of reforming the political establishment. “What would you say to people, particularly young people, who have lost hope?”

Ocasio-Cortez responds that after Obama’s first years in office, “I had a complete lack of hope. I saw a Democratic Party that was too distracted by institutionalized power to stand up for working people.”

But Ocasio-Cortez regained hope when she ran for Congress as a Democrat. The way to combat “hopelessness,” Ocasio-Cortez said, is to apply pressure to those in power to encourage change from within the political establishment. “When people start engaging individually enough, it starts to amount to something bigger” and “threatens the legitimacy of mass-media outlets, institutions of power, etc. It has to get so big that it is unignorable, in order for these positions up top to respond.”

The claim that those “up top” in the Democratic Party can be pressured into enacting social reforms has been exposed as completely false over the course of Ocasio-Cortez’s time in office.

Throughout the pandemic, students and workers have engaged in protests and strikes demanding the shutdown of workplaces and schools during the coronavirus pandemic, and the Democrats responded by forcing a “return to work” that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. When millions of people demanded expanded social spending and increased stimulus payments during the pandemic, Democrats passed the massive CARES Act bailing out the corporations and banks.

After the largest protests in history, following the killing of George Floyd in May 2020, demanding an end to police violence and murder, the Democrats voted to increase funding for police. Huge demonstrations took place throughout the Trump administration against his fascist anti-immigrant policies, but the Biden

administration has responded by deporting immigrants at an even faster pace and continuing Trump policies, such as using Title 42 health claims to limit the right to asylum. The reality is the exact opposite of what Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA claim. The greater the demand for change from below, the more ruthless the Democrats are in pursuing the interests of the financial aristocracy and suppressing social discontent.

Aware of the danger of growing social opposition to war, inequality and the threat of dictatorship, Ocasio-Cortez discouraged readers from using words like “capitalism” and “socialism.”

“We have to talk about patriarchy, racism, capitalism, but you’re not going to have those conversations by using those words,” she said. Instead, “You have to have those conversations by really responding in uplifting moments.”

Ocasio-Cortez also presented the use of the label “socialist” to describe her political views as a tragicomic misunderstanding orchestrated by the media. At the time of her 2018 election, she told Remnick, “It was, like, breaking news: the third-most-powerful Democrat in the House of Representatives seems to have been unseated by this radical socialist. All the buzzwords that the right wing uses now were also completely legitimized by mainstream media on the night of the election. I never had a chance.”

It is notable that Ocasio-Cortez also made reference to growing criticism against her from the left, noting that “some ‘principled leftists’” have opposed her use of political stunts to cover for conventional Democratic Party politics. The fact that Ocasio-Cortez uses the term “principled leftists” in scare quotes, as an insult, only further exposes her role as an unprincipled conventional capitalist politician whose role is to block the development of a socialist movement independent of the corporate-controlled two-party system.



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