

Jacobin attempts to resurrect image of pro-war Ocasio-Cortez, DSA

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On May 26, *Jacobin*'s Liza Featherstone published an article claiming that Democratic Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was helping to inspire a socialist movement against corporate power by endorsing the Democratic Socialists of America's (DSA's) slate of 13 candidates for New York state office.

In an article titled "AOC Is Endorsing the Full Slate of New York Democratic Socialist State Candidates," Featherstone writes, "AOC's endorsement reflected solidarity with NYC-DSA's platform and movement, against the forces of capitalism and reaction both inside and outside the Democratic Party."

The article is a public relations ploy aimed at resurrecting Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA's failing image as "socialist." Ocasio-Cortez and many official DSA accounts tweeted the *Jacobin* article almost immediately upon publication.

At this point, the claim that anything Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA do is "against the forces of capitalism and reaction" is downright embarrassing.

In mid-May, Ocasio-Cortez and all DSA members of Congress voted to send \$40 billion in military aid to arm the fascist militias in Ukraine, to train Ukrainian soldiers and police, to house American soldiers throughout Europe and to replenish US missiles, tanks and other weapons. The vote brings two nuclear armed powers, the United States and Russia, closer to a shooting war than at any point since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA members of Congress voted to spend such massive sums of money to pursue the geostrategic interests of Wall Street amid mass social suffering at home. In AOC's own district, which is comprised of parts of the Bronx and Queens, poverty is rampant, and workers are struggling to survive the

ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the rising cost of living. A gallon of gas in her congressional district costs \$5.00 in large part due to the war she has voted to endorse. One cannot claim to fight "against the forces of capitalism" at home while doing their bidding abroad.

Featherstone and *Jacobin* present the DSA slate as the spearhead of socialism, but the DSA recipients of Ocasio-Cortez's endorsement are not opponents of imperialist war. For the most part, their campaign websites and official Twitter accounts ignore the danger of nuclear war and refuse to condemn the US-NATO role in the proxy war against Russia.

In March, the *New York Times* attempted to ask members of the DSA New York slate what their views on the war are and the results were telling. After citing one DSA candidate's statement that "NATO is one of the primary lines of defense that we have to address Russian aggression towards Ukraine," the *Times* wrote:

Many other New York City officials aligned with D.S.A.—some of whom have weighed in often on other national and international issues in the past—were far more circumspect.

"Thanks for reaching out, but our campaign has no comment on that," emailed Stephen Wood, a spokesman for Brooklyn State Senate candidate David Alexis, on Wednesday.

Other elected officials who declined to comment or did not return requests for comment included Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez; State senators Julia Salazar and Jabari Brisport; and Assembly members Zohran Kwame Mamdani, Marcela Mitaynes and Phara Souffrant Forrest. Nor did Assemblywoman

Emily Gallagher, of Brooklyn, agree to comment.

“If you’d like to write about all electric buildings act, LLC disclosure legislation, or any of my other work as a legislator I’d be happy to talk,” Ms. Gallagher said.

All the candidates referenced here are among the 13 individuals Ocasio-Cortez has endorsed. Such fecklessness is to be expected of Democratic Party politicians like those the DSA hopes to send to Albany.

Featherstone has long used her *Jacobin* column to promote the “left” bona fides of various right-wing capitalist politicians. In January, she wrote an article titled “New York Democratic Socialists Are Playing the Long Game,” which went so far as to praise Democratic leaders like Senator Charles Schumer and Governor Kathy Hochul.

“Schumer has embraced some of the socialists’ top priorities,” Featherstone wrote in January. *Jacobin* quoted State Senator Salazar, who said, “Senator Schumer is a shrewd politician who has his ear to the ground, and sees that politics are changing and that communities are electing democratic socialists because these are the policies they support.”

Featherstone said Hochul was “somewhat responsive to socialist demands” and even praised her support for increasing police budgets. She wrote in January, “There is no one ‘working-class’ view on policing, but so far, the ‘defund the police’ message could complicate NYC-DSA’s efforts to build a mass electoral base,” calling it a “risky message” that “can seem out of touch with well-founded fears of crime.”

The DSA’s political essence is subservience to the right-wing Democratic Party leadership. Its elected officials do not pressure the Democratic leadership to the left; they merely prop them up and facilitate their right-wing policies, including on questions of imperialist war.

One of the most humiliating examples of this dynamic appeared in Jonathan Martin and Alex Burns’ book *This Will Not Pass* (May 2022, Simon and Schuster), which reviews the 2020 elections and their aftermath. The authors relate the following story from early 2021:

Indeed Pelosi was working the left-wing activists in her caucus as intensively as she was courting the cranky moderates. They, too, could block her path to the Speakership if they wanted to. The Speaker gathered a group of six of the most outspoken young progressives in the House—including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the newly elected lawmakers Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush—for a meeting in her office to hear out their priorities for the new Congress. Bowman and Bush had both defeated incumbent Democrats in primary elections the previous summer, and both had been quiet about their intentions toward the Speaker.

The progressives left impressed. All of them ended up supporting Pelosi for Speaker. Bowman, an educator by training, was taken with her commanding style: “Speaker Pelosi is a gangster,” he says admiringly.

This encapsulates the pro-war, pro-capitalist politics of the DSA. As Leon Trotsky wrote in *War and the Fourth International*: “A ‘socialist’ who preaches national defense is a petty-bourgeois reactionary at the service of decaying capitalism.”



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