Further audio leaks expose backroom dealings by Los Angeles Democrats

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A Los Angeles City Council meeting scheduled for last Friday was canceled due to protests calling for the resignation of city council members Kevin de León and Gil Cedillo, two prominent Democratic Party officials who made racist comments during a redistricting meeting last fall.

Former city council president Nury Martinez and county AFL-CIO head Ron Herrera have been implicated as well, leading to their swift resignations from their posts after calls to step down emanated from the Biden White House and other leading Democratic Party officials. In audio recordings published last week, Martinez is heard denouncing Oaxacans, Armenians, Jewish people and white people. She attacked rival politicians for being "for the blacks" and called the African American child of another city council member a "little monkey" who should be beaten.

Several hundred protesters, many of Oaxacan descent, demonstrated in downtown Los Angeles Friday carrying signs saying things like "Fuera Racistas!" (Racists out!) and denouncing the council members' racism against all different ethnicities.

These protests have caused the crisis-ridden Los Angeles City Council to hold virtual meetings in lieu of in-person meetings on the false premise of COVID-19 precautions, citing a recent exposure of a positive COVID-19 case at last Tuesday's meeting.

"The virtual meeting is due to the COVID-19 diagnosis, and that's it. We know Angelenos are still feeling pain and anger, and they have every right to weigh in and express those feelings," Dan Halden, spokesperson for LA City Council President, stated in an email Friday night. "We will take public comment so that people have ample opportunity to make their voices heard." At the last in-person meeting, protesters giving public comments to the meeting used the opportunity to condemn the council, and riot police were brought in to suppress them.

Using COVID as an excuse is utterly hypocritical, as LA's anti-scientific approach to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to over 96,000 unnecessary deaths in LA, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, long term health problems from Long COVID and the complete breakdown of the health care system.

Michelle, an LAUSD teacher, wrote to the WSWS her experience in running for local public office in Los Angeles, which sheds light on this occurrence:

"Many years ago I aspired to run for public office. You could pay a couple grand to get on the ballot or collect signatures. I made myself sick gathering signatures and when it was said and done not enough could be verified for me to get on the ballot. I also met with a former councilman who had represented our district for many years. He told me that the minorities in office are handpicked in their youth by businessmen behind the scenes. They pay private high school tuitions, then send them to prestigious colleges. He told me Jose Huizar (another former LA City Councilperson later indicted for corruption) had his support and would be elected. I shouldn't waste my time. He was right, but Huizar got caught taking money from developers and was charged with federal crimes. They just replaced him with [other] Hispanics handpicked by the secret society business people. The council person I spoke with died in 2012, so there's no real way to prove any of this. I just know I plan to steer clear of any future political involvement in the future."

Since the initial leaks on Reddit earlier this month, further audio has been published that involves Herrera and Hannah Cho, an aide who has previously worked with other councilors, including Mitch O'Farrell (now the acting council president since Martinez stepped

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down), Herb Wesson, and Holly Mitchell (now chair of LA county) and who now works with Herrera at the LA County Federation of Labor. In these recordings, they discuss how to help O'Farrell, an ally of Herrera, against a political opponent in the Democratic Socialists of America, Hugo Soto-Martinez, for Council District 13.

As with the previously released comments which were mainly from Nury Martinez, the new ones reveal a similar mixture of backroom intrigue and political cynicism. And while the Martinez audio was primarily about redistricting, this round focuses on efforts by Herrera and Cho to undermine Soto-Martinez.

Though there is not quite as much overt racism as in the previous recording, it is by no means absent. Cho kicks it off with, "Well, that's it for my first house of labor meeting, other than…" Then, in a muffled whisper, what appears to be either "That's a lot of white people," or "That's a lot of black people." The audio is somewhat muffled, and it is unclear exactly which ethnicity she felt compelled to say that there was a "lot of."

The recordings continue with their plans to beat Soto-Martinez by buying endorsements from various Democratic Party groups. In Cho's words, we need to "buy up some of the these larger clubs, we just need to buy 'em up. And we need to just take over them … Like LACYD, like the Young Dems, that's the one we need to buy. The LGBT one? [Referring to the Stonewall Democratic Club] We need to buy them off."

To deter Soto-Martinez from running, Herrera evidently offered him a deal: "Here's the deal I brokered, right? Go work for Mitch [O'Farrell]. Learn the district. Learn the job. And it's yours in four years."

But perhaps the most revealing comment is one that sums up the attitude of the Democratic Party towards the DSA. As Herrera puts it: "He [Hugo Soto-Martinez] should have nothing but support from me personally, from you, and from the federation. Maybe not in that order, I don't know ... But when that f*** forgets that he's union, and goes, you know, progressive DSA, I don't have a problem. I don't care if he's DSA, I really don't. Because I think that a hybrid now wins for us, that understands labor. He's it. He's in. Right? But … He forgot his roots."

This is how the Democratic Party views the DSA. The DSA is allowed to exist, is even encouraged, by the mainstay of the Democratic Party and the unions, precisely because that "hybrid" approach "wins" for them. They're "in," as long as they don't forget who they're working for. Such is the party the DSA wants to reform.

With a rise of militant strike action across the US, the Democratic Party and their pseudo-left appendages have been working around the clock on damage control, with politicians—from local officials to Joe Biden—calling for the implicated city council members to step down and be replaced by other trusted members of the upper-middle class with similar pedigrees.

The turn towards racial politics has been used for the past four decades to cover up the deeply reactionary and anti-working class policies of the Democratic Party. The pseudo-left, including the DSA, has given invaluable assistance by promoting the lie that the "representation" of disenfranchised minorities—be it on the basis of race, gender, religion or sexual orientation—would alleviate the corruption and inequality which have been commonplace in America.

For all their platitudes, the scandal at the Los Angeles City Hall has demonstrated the real political and class character of the Democratic Party: A thoroughly reactionary and right-wing organization whose preferred methods are those of political subterfuge, whose language is that of the racist far right, and whose approach is that of the gangster.

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