

George Santos and the putrefaction of capitalist politics: US Republican congressman-elect exposed as fraud

Fred Mazelis
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The saga of George Santos, the Republican from the New York City suburbs elected to Congress less than two months ago, has exposed the unprincipled and lying character, not just of this individual, or of the party that nominated him, but of capitalist politics as a whole.

Santos's election victory, by a comfortable eight-point margin in a seat that had been held for years by the Democrats, was part of the New York State midterm debacle for the party of Biden, Pelosi and New York Democrats Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries. Four House seats were "flipped" to the fascistic Republicans, contributing significantly to the narrow majority won by Trump's party in the House of Representatives.

Within a few weeks of the November vote, virtually every single claim that went into Santos's biography was exposed as a fraud. The *New York Times* discovered, in short order, that the 34-year-old native of Brazil was not, as he claimed, the grandson of Ukrainian Jews who fled the Holocaust. He was a Catholic and his grandparents were born in Brazil. Neither Citigroup nor Goldman Sachs had any record of Santos in their employment, as he had claimed. Instead, his employment record consisted of a job as a customer service operator for a satellite dish TV provider. Nor had he graduated from Baruch College and New York University, as he maintained, or for that matter gotten a degree from any other institution of higher learning.

His personal finances were a combination of chaos and suspicious elements that were nowhere explained. In 2020 he reported income of \$55,000, but two years later he loaned his own campaign more than half a

million dollars and reported savings and checking account balances of between \$1 and \$5 million.

Santos claimed that he managed 13 real estate properties, but none could be confirmed. He has faced numerous eviction proceedings for unpaid rent. Even his address could not be confirmed. An individual at the address he had listed had no knowledge of him.

These were only a few of what Santos described as "embellishments" to his resume. The congressman-elect waited more than a week to address the various revelations. He attempted to finesse some of them, for instance, "correcting" an earlier claim that one of his businesses had "lost four people" in the horrific Pulse nightclub massacre in which 49 people were killed in an anti-gay rampage in Orlando, Florida. According to Santos, the four were in the process of being hired, but there was no evidence to back up even this claim.

The Republican leadership, most prominently Kevin McCarthy of California, who is running for House speaker when the new Congress convenes on January 3, has maintained total silence on the Santos scandal. In Santos's district and close by, the Nassau County Republican chairman has voiced his "disappointment," and a new Republican congressman in neighboring Suffolk County has called for an investigation.

The Republican Jewish Coalition, the group of ultra-right Trump backers and extreme Zionists, was caught with its pants down after hosting Santos at a high-profile meeting. The incoming congressman now claims that he never claimed to be Jewish. He said he meant "Jew-ish," jokingly suggesting that there was some distant bond. He made this assertion even though the claim to be a Jew was there in black and white. In a position paper on Israel that he circulated during his

campaign, he described himself as “a proud American Jew.” After his lie was exposed Santos denounced those trying “to disinherit me from being Jewish or even allowing to care for Israel and Judaism in a time and era where antisemitism is at an all-time rise.”

As for the Democrats, they issued indignant calls for Santos’s resignation. Robert Zimmerman, the loser in November, demanded a rerun of the contest. Santos himself insists that he will be sworn in next week, and in fact there are few legal means to remove an elected representative.

While official biographical information of the US Congress has often been shown to contain “embellishments,” rarely have they descended to the level of shamelessness and crudity exhibited by Santos.

No socialist or class-conscious worker can identify with the phony outrage feigned by the media and the Democratic Party bigwigs, however. There are no grounds for shock or surprise at this scandal. It points to broader issues relating to the nature of the political system and the capitalist political establishment.

To some extent, and on a local level, Santos is to Congress what Sam Bankman-Fried is to Wall Street. In this case, it is hard to believe that opposition research, for a contest in which the Democrats raised at least \$3 million, did not turn up more than enough to blow the whistle on Santos’s lies. It is very likely, however, that the media and self-proclaimed liberals and “progressives” pulled their punches because Santos made cynical use of identity politics—yet more evidence of its reactionary role.

The candidate screened his ultra-right views behind his various claims to be gay and Jewish. The media was hypnotized by the fact that the vote pitted two openly gay candidates against one another, breathlessly informing us that this was a first in US history. After Santos’s election, there were constant references to the fact that he was the first non-incumbent gay Republican to enter Congress. That he was “a proud Jew” only added to his attraction.

What are the conditions which give rise to a candidate like Santos? And what are the conditions that allowed him to win? The whole two-party system in the US is deeply corrupt and deeply despised.

In his attempts to deflect attention from his fabrications, Santos has pointed the finger at his Democratic opponents. Biden has been lying for 40

years, he declared, but no one is calling for him to resign.

There is ample truth behind this right-wing demagoguery. Biden has declared the pandemic over, even as COVID-19 remains the third-highest cause of death and US life expectancy continues to fall. His administration is prosecuting a proxy war in Ukraine under the false flag of “democracy” and preparing for confrontation with China. Hillary Clinton and the majority of Democrats vociferously endorsed the Iraq war, based on lies. Obama got the Nobel Peace Prize and proceeded to wage war in various parts of the world for his entire two terms of office. Biden, the most “pro-union” president ever, just robbed the railroad workers of their right to strike and presides over an economy in which the billionaires are more powerful than ever.

The lesson of this latest political escapade is that the working class has no choice between these liars who represent the ruling class. As the Socialist Equality Party has demonstrated in the deepening class struggle, a new leadership must be built and is being built in the fight for socialism.



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