

Unions use Los Angeles rally billed as support for striking writers to promote Democrats in 2024

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On May 26, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (LA Fed), a subsidiary of the AFL-CIO, held a rally and dance party in downtown Los Angeles in front of the Crypto.com arena. It was billed as a show of support for members of the Writers Guild of America (WGA) on strike since May 2.

Writers, fighting low pay and encroaching casualization, were given notice there would not be picketing that day, and they should instead join the rally. The attendees, numbering in the hundreds, were a mix of lower-level union and Democratic Party officials and supporters, and those writers who decided to attend.

US presidential elections are notorious for starting early, and the rally had the character of an opening shot in the Democrats' 2024 campaign. Speakers at the rally were an amalgam of union officials and Democratic Party scoundrels, several of whom pointed directly to the election. These included Liz Shuler, president of the AFL-CIO; Rusty Hicks, chair of the California Democratic Party; Meredith Stiehm, president of the WGA West; Cecily Myart-Cruz, president of the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA); Lorena Gonzalez, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Federation of Labor; officials from UNITE HERE! Local 11, IATSE B-192, Teamsters Local 396 and SEIU Local 721.

The event was an exercise in empty demagoguery, which committed none of the officials to anything. While speaker after speaker denounced corporate greed and condemned the massive cost of living in the state, they obscured their own role in maintaining the status quo and strangling every effort by workers to oppose it. A plethora of platitudes and chants of "When we fight, we

win!" or "Si se puede!" weren't enough to obscure this.

For its part, the LA Fed has still not recovered from last year's scandal in which leaked audio recordings between then LA Fed President Ron Herrera and leading Democratic City Councilors exposed the racist and sordid character of their backroom dealings.

The UTLA's Myart-Cruz postured as someone who still needed to be convinced by the Democrats. "Election season is coming up," she said, "and we need those Democrats to stand up, to speak up, to speak on behalf of us, the workers. ... Our support of the Democratic Party is not automatic. You're going to have to show up. And we will not stand with Democrats who undermine the working people of Los Angeles and California."

Which Democrats does Myart-Cruz know of who do not "undermine the working people of Los Angeles and California"? Politically, Los Angeles and California are both dominated by the Democratic Party, who control a state home to both the epicenter of the country's homeless crisis, and about 180 billionaires. At the national level, the Democratic Party is presiding over conditions of rampant inflation, a murderous herd immunity policy and a war drive threatening to bring about World War III.

Two weeks ago, the WGA invited Democratic Congressman and former chair of the House Intelligence Committee Adam Schiff to speak at its picket lines. Schiff is a longtime corporate Democratic and war-hawk who has taken campaign money directly from the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), the opponent of the writers in the current strike. No official of the WGA was impolite

enough to ask him about this.

Last year, when railroaders were set to go on strike, the Biden administration, in the manner of countless authoritarian regimes, presided over the passage of a bill that prevented the walkout. Supposedly “left” figures, such as Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, voted in favor of the measure.

Many of the striking writers present May 26 had an uneasy response to the rally and the Democrats. The WSWs spoke to some of the writers in attendance.

Logan, a writer for several shows on MTV, said, “I’m not a fan of the Democratic Party. I don’t think that any political party is really beneficial. I think politics is somewhat of a spiritual abyss ... If you said Democratic Party, I would say, no, not for me.” He also offered a comment about the impact of the profit motive on artistic life: “If money is involved, then it will always adulterate the artistic process. You can point to almost any field, for example, music, comedy, whatever you prefer. It will always be perverted in some way. It’s the corporate process that makes everything go wrong and that’s why it’s ruining the content coming out.”

Another writer, who told us that he may leave writing to reenter nursing soon and who is saddled with \$200,000 in student load debt, said of Schiff’s appearance at the WGA picket lines, “It’s a mess. It’s not OK, it’s not. I don’t know what we’re going to do ...”

Many writers also talked about their working conditions, and about having to work multiple jobs. One said, “Everything’s diminished. They whittle down and whittle down pay, and then give us longer hours. They’re trying to force us to become gig workers ... The few jobs that are there now are whittled down even more. That’s why I’m a teacher and a writer. I can’t retire, that’s why I teach. I like to write too, but ...”

Sheila, a writer for five years, told the WSWs, “I’m only 29. When I came out here and started working when I was around 24, 25 years old, rent was already quite high and it’s only gotten higher. I lived with a roommate all the way up until like three months ago, when I could finally afford having my own apartment. I look at older writers and their residuals paid for houses that they were able to buy, and I don’t think I’ll ever be able to buy a house.”

She added, “So, I think that’s a big part of it, too, and making sure that we see a piece of the profit to make life better for writers ... Late-stage capitalism is a very big problem, so hopefully we can move on to something better.”



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