

Pro-business Democrat Cherelle Parker wins Philadelphia mayor's race

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Philadelphia's election for its 100th mayor took place on November 7, with Democrat Cherelle Parker winning a landslide victory against Republican former city councilman David Oh. Official results show that Parker won 75.3 percent of the vote while Oh won 24.7 percent.

Parker was widely expected to win, since Philadelphia has been a Democratic Party-controlled city for over 70 years. The City Council member won the nomination of her party last spring in a primary contested between multiple candidates, ranging from openly pro-business candidates like herself and Rebecca Rhynhart to the pseudo-left Helen Gym, backed by the Democratic Socialists of America and Bernie Sanders.

Despite presenting her agenda as targeted to the “common sense” working person, the new mayor will do nothing to resolve the social crisis facing the working class of Philadelphia. In fact, Parker's election signals a stepped-up attack on living standards, directed by the city's business elite.

The Democratic candidate campaigned heavily on a law-and-order platform, taking advantage of fears over crime, itself driven by the city's high level of poverty, and making pledges to increase the police force and support stop-and-frisk policies which allow law enforcement to stop anybody they deem “suspicious.”

Such policies will do nothing to help working people, and will only contribute to further episodes like the police murder of Eddie Irizarry, who was shot and killed by city police, despite being unarmed, only seconds after being pulled over in August.

The killing produced a large public outcry. Parker, for her part, did not go as far as to mention Irizarry's name during the campaign. Her response to municipal judge Wendy Pew's abrupt dismissal of all charges against

former officer Mark Dial in late September was to state, “I am not going to play Monday morning quarterback and second-guess process, procedures, and protocols.” That is, she would accept officer Dial's unconvincing explanation for the shooting of an unarmed person at face value.

Last month, a city judge reversed Pew's ruling to dismiss all charges against Dial, insisting that the disgraced former officer face a trial.

Parker also advocated deploying the Pennsylvania National Guard in Philadelphia in the name of combating crime. In response to pushback against her ideas about the police, Parker has mouthed empty phrases, saying that as mayor she'd make sure that police get more “training and accountability measures.”

As an openly pro-business Democrat, Parker believes the cure to all of society's ills lies in attracting corporate investment. In a post-election interview, she further explained her goals: “We need federal, state and local government, along with the private sector and philanthropic communities, to help us address the public health and safety.”

The city is currently home to 18 Fortune 500 corporations and, according to Technet, is on the top 20 list for best locations for technology startups. This is partially owing to its vast array of universities and higher education institutions, as well as the right-wing orientation of both capitalist parties.

Despite this, Philadelphia has remained mired in high levels of poverty. A 2020 Pew research paper states: “Among the nation's 10 most populous cities, none has a higher proportion of cost-burdened households with low incomes than Philadelphia.” The document notes that this is especially the case in the sections of the city which voted most heavily for Parker in the primary and general election.

To compensate for these contradictions in her campaign, Parker also leaned heavily on appeals to race and gender, a staple tactic of the Democratic Party's playbook. Both her campaign and news outlets referred to her status as a black woman and Parker herself told how she came from nothing and how she was "inspired" by reading the works of black women to become what she is today.

Significantly, Parker's primary win, while still powered primarily on votes from the city's impoverished neighborhoods, received less support from these voters than previously expected. An analysis in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted, "In this election, the lowest-income residents didn't comprise a big chunk of the electorate, but delivered Parker a majority of their votes."

The *Inquirer* elsewhere suggested that the city's Democratic Party apparatus may be "fracturing" in regard to which candidates it chooses to put forward, a response to increasing levels of inequality after decades of Democratic Party dominance in the country's sixth-largest city.

Parker has frequently spoken out about supporting local businesses and raising the minimum wage to \$17.53 an hour, which, according to her, is the level of a livable wage. In fact, for a single mother with a child, \$27.57 an hour at the very least is needed for a livable wage. Parker's association with the city's corrupt trade union establishment, including support from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 98, reveals the revolving door between the city's political groupings, big business and the labor bureaucracy.

IBEW Local 98 has a particularly corrupt history. Last year, its political director, Marita Crawford, was charged with four counts of wire fraud. Local 98 came out in support of Parker during her campaign.



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