DSA endorses pro-Zionist Los Angeles Councilmember Nithya Raman

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In a statement last Wednesday, the Los Angeles chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) announced its endorsement of Los Angeles Councilmember Nithya Raman, who is running for her second term in the upcoming 2024 Los Angeles City Council general election.

During her four years in office, Raman, a DSA member, has worked closely with Zionist organizations in Los Angeles and twice voted to increase the budget of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). In addition to the DSA, Raman's reelection campaign is being endorsed by the *Los Angeles Times* editorial board, LA Mayor Karen Bass (Democrat), and Democrats for Israel-Los Angeles (DFI-LA), a pro-Zionist organization aligned with the Democratic Party.

The DSA's endorsement of Raman—cynically combined with a toothless censure of her—embodies the reactionary politics of this "socialist" organization. The DSA operates as the left-wing of the Democratic Party, corralling the growing opposition to capitalism and imperialist war behind the single oldest capitalist party on the planet.

In their endorsement, the DSA-LA Steering Committee wrote, "Members ultimately decided to uphold the endorsement and censure Councilmember Raman. Despite Councilmember Raman accepting and promoting the endorsement of DFI-LA, she has called for a permanent ceasefire and has acknowledged the violence and death suffered by Palestinians in council chambers."

The DSA-LA's separate censure letter is more an exercise in damage control than a statement. The letter laments that "Councilmember Raman's actions have undermined the work of DSA-LA's Palestine Solidarity Working Group, Political Education Committee, and DSA organizers broadly. Moreover, these actions have driven a wedge between this chapter and allied Palestinian liberation groups spending significant time and energy pressuring elected officials to end U.S. funding of Israeli colonial violence."

In other words, the problem is not that Raman is a Zionist, opposed to taking a principled political stand against the Democratic Party and its support of genocide. No, the problem is that Raman's stance interferes with the DSA's role as a catchment to prevent people from leaving the Democratic Party.

During her campaign for City Council in 2020, the pro-Zionist *Jewish Journal* had already taken note of her orientation when it published her comments rejecting the Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment (BDS) movement. In 2021, Raman co-authored a motion concerning the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) that was used to shut down discussion on a BDS motion in the Unified Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) union.

In 2022, Raman co-authored a resolution which adopted policies on antisemitism for the city council that conflated antisemitism with anti-Zionism. Her motion included "applying double standards" to Israel as a key example of antisemitism.

On October 7, she issued a statement "condemning the horrific violence by Hamas and praying for a peaceful end to this conflict." The statement made no reference whatsoever to the ongoing, brutal occupation of Palestine, or any of the conditions underlying Hamas' actions on October 7.

Three days later she sent another tweet aimed at distancing herself from the DSA because it was "unacceptably devoid of empathy for communities in Israel." Since she wrote these two tweets, more than 30,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed by US-made bombs in Israel. She has not tweeted about the

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issue since.

In November, Raman issued a statement at city hall that fecklessly mourned Palestinian death while sowing illusions in and support for the Biden administration: “I wholeheartedly support our federal government taking every measure possible to extend the current ceasefire into a permanent one—bringing an end to the violence in Israel and Palestine, the safe return of all hostages, and a lasting peace with independence and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.”

To what measures Raman was referring, no one knows. The most remarkable contribution of the Biden administration to a ceasefire is its veto against a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. The genocide has been reliant on the Biden Administration sending a daily military supply plane with the bombs used to destroy Gaza.

Gregg Solkovits, president of DFI-LA, clarified that his organization supported Raman despite her November “call” for a ceasefire because she opposed BDS.

“We appreciate that Nithya Raman supports the right of Israel to exist and personally opposes BDS… She has not been the kind of hostile ideologue that other people elected with DSA support have been,” Solkovits said in public statements.

The DSA is pursuing a strategy to support Biden’s candidacy in the 2024 election. New York Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a DSA member, declared on the podcast “I’ve Had It” that she strongly endorsed Biden in 2024 despite some vague disagreements on Gaza. Ocasio-Cortez, like Raman, speaks from both corners of her mouth: while shedding crocodile tears about the Gaza onslaught, she has called for pro-Palestine protests to be “shut down” as well saying that she would consider voting to fund Israel’s “Iron Dome” missile system.

As DSA-LA is organizing yet another stunt aimed at damage control, it invited Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian-American historian supporting BDS and the two-state solution, to speak on the first Intifada on February 7. The move has sparked outraged comments on DSA-LA’s Instagram account: “The nerve to do a presentation on the first intifada while endorsing a Zionist.” Or “Why are you endorsing Zionist Nithya Raman?”

The role of the DSA is to capture and immobilize genuine opposition among workers and even among its own members to the policies pursued by the Democratic Party. While it seeks to convince its constituency that it is trying to pull the establishment to left, it instead shifts inevitably to the right.

The DSA suggests that appealing to Biden and putting “pressure” on the Democrats would compel them to abide by popular sentiments. This is like asking pyromaniac to put out a fire. The policies of the Democratic Party, like those of the Republican Party, are driven by the class interests of large corporations, Wall Street and the Pentagon.

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