

Tlaib, UAW, pseudo-left promote “uncommitted” diversion on eve of Democratic primary in Michigan

Kathleen Martin, Barry Grey
27 February 2024

On Sunday, the Michigan Task Force for Palestine hosted an event titled “CeaseFire Now!” at the Dearborn Manor. The rally was billed as “bringing together Arab and Muslim, African American, Latino and Jewish communities, labor, and peace and justice advocates in Metro Detroit to demand a ceasefire in Palestine.” The event was attended by several hundred people.

Its central purpose was to call for voters, particularly among Michigan’s large Arab-American population and among students and young people who are angry and disgusted over President Biden’s full support for and complicity in the Israeli genocide in Gaza, to vote “uncommitted” in Tuesday’s Democratic primary, rather than casting a vote for Biden, the party’s presumptive presidential candidate.

Leaders and organizers of the “uncommitted” campaign are well aware that their protest maneuver will not prevent Biden from winning the Michigan Democratic primary election. They have, moreover, gone out of their way to make clear that they are not opposing Biden’s reelection. In the words of former Michigan Democratic Congressman Andy Levin, as quoted in the *New York Times*, the goal is not to “destroy” Biden, but to “save” him.

Above all, the aim is to promote the illusion that Biden and the Democratic Party as a whole can be shifted through pressure from below from their policies of global war and mass death—in Europe in the proxy war against Russia over Ukraine, in the Middle East in the genocidal onslaught against the Palestinians and war preparations against Iran, and in South Asia in the military preparations against China—and the accompanying attacks on democratic rights and the jobs and social conditions of the working class at home. These include the bipartisan McCarthyite witch-hunt against opposition on college campuses to the Gaza genocide and Biden’s adoption of the Republicans’ fascistic policies against immigrants.

As the November election approaches, both capitalist parties—the Democrats and Republicans—are in acute crisis. A majority of the electorate hates both presumptive presidential candidates—the war criminal Biden and the fascist would-be dictator Donald Trump.

The very fact that a doddering 81-year-old reactionary vying for reelection is opposed by the man who, as outgoing president, oversaw an attempted coup after being defeated for reelection in 2020, demonstrates the terminal crisis and breakdown of American democracy. Both big business parties and both presumptive presidential campaigns are in crisis, as mass protests against the Gaza slaughter continue and strikes and protests by workers against layoffs, wage cuts and grotesque levels of social inequality spread, in the US and internationally.

The source of this crisis is the unprecedented crisis of the capitalist system, which finds its sharpest expression in the center of world capitalism and imperialism, the United States. While the organizers of the “uncommitted” campaign in Michigan hope it will slow the hemorrhaging of support for Biden in pivotal swing states such as Michigan—where most polls currently have Trump in the lead—there are increasing signs that sections of the Democratic Party establishment, the corporate media and the ruling class are considering dumping Biden in advance of the November election and replacing him with a younger and ostensibly less discredited politician. Similar discussions are taking place within the GOP regarding Trump.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, a national co-chair of the Biden reelection campaign, has been prominently featured in both the print and broadcast media as the key figure in Biden’s effort to win Michigan in 2024, as he did in 2020. She opposes the “uncommitted” campaign and urges a vote for Biden, while taking care to signal sympathy for those calling for the protest vote.

On the same day as the Dearborn rally, Whitmer was featured on CNN’s “State of the Union” program, where she urged a vote for Biden in the primary, while acknowledging that there might be a significant “uncommitted” vote.

The Sunday *New York Times* carried a front-page profile of Whitmer, which included the following:

As concerns about Mr. Biden’s age and poll numbers have mounted, some Democrats have voiced hope that another politician—perhaps Ms. Whitmer or another governor like Gavin Newsom of California, J.B. Pritzker of Illinois or Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania—might somehow replace the president on this year’s ballot, a scenario the party has widely dismissed.

On Monday, MSNBC carried an interview in which Whitmer was asked directly about talk of possibly replacing Biden as the Democrats’ presidential candidate. Asked what she would say to voters who would like to see Biden replaced, she said: “I would say that train is out of the station. Get on board.”

The speakers at Sunday’s rally in Dearborn included an array of fake “left” Democratic office-holders and politicians, as well as representatives of the United Auto Workers bureaucracy and pseudo-left promoters of the Democratic Party and the trade union apparatus.

They included US Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud, former Ohio State Senator Nina Turner, Detroit City Council member Gabriela Santiago-Romero, UAW Local 600 Financial Secretary Jay Makled, Maureen Taylor of the Welfare Rights Organization, Rev. Ed Rowe and Julie Hurwitz of Jewish Voice for Peace.

Makled spoke alongside Tony Richard, vice president of Local 600, and Harold Byrd, another bureaucrat on the UAW staff. Each has a listed salary of \$173,000. Makled promoted the official UAW call for a ceasefire, while omitting the fact that UAW leadership has endorsed Biden's reelection campaign.

Detroit City Council member Gabriela Santiago-Romero said:

I will be voting "uncommitted" and believe that we all should. I worked for the Hillary Clinton campaign out of fear that Trump would win. Two weeks in, I knew she would lose. We said she was going to lose and we were ignored.

She then appealed to attendees to continue working within the Democratic Party, urging them to "[k]eep calling and emailing your elected officials."

Nina Turner, who served as the national co-chair of Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential campaign, began her comments with a denunciation of Hamas violence and called Israel an "ally."

Rashida Tlaib spelled out most clearly the political and historical falsification on which the "uncommitted" campaign is based: Namely, that the ongoing mass murder and ethnic cleansing in Gaza is entirely the work of Netanyahu, and that Biden is merely committing a blunder by supporting him.

Tlaib, the lone Palestinian member of Congress, was censured by the House of Representatives in November for speaking out in defense of the Palestinians in Gaza. Twenty-two Democrats joined virtually all House Republicans in this direct attack on democratic rights, making Tlaib the first representative since the Civil War to be censured for expressing her political beliefs. Despite our fundamental and unbridgeable political differences with the Dearborn-based Democrat, the WSWS opposed and denounced the censure.

This, however, does not alter the reactionary role she plays in covering up the role of American imperialism in the brutal persecution of the Palestinians historically and the Biden administration's direct complicity in the current slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. As the WSWS has explained, everything the Netanyahu government is doing in Gaza, the West Bank and beyond is possible only because it has the full support—financial, military and political—of the US. Just a week ago Washington for the third time since the beginning of the Gaza war vetoed a ceasefire resolution in the UN Security Council. It has repeatedly rejected any "red lines" limiting Israel's campaign of carpet bombing and starvation.

This is not the result of a "mistaken" policy, but the continuation of 75 years of US support for the Zionist state, which has served as a militarized outpost of US imperialism in the critical, oil-rich region. The falsification of the role of US capitalism and imperialism in the displacement and repression of the Palestinian masses is required to promote the lie that the American government can be forced to break with the genocidal policies of the Zionist state through protest and pressure from below.

In her remarks to the Dearborn rally, Tlaib said:

My message to my colleagues and president is simple: It is time to break up with genocidal maniac Netanyahu... Netanyahu is a man with a long history of turning to extremism and violence to boost his political support... There is a very real danger that he [Netanyahu] will expand this war regionally in an effort to stay in power. Make no mistake: the US is slowly being drawn into Netanyahu's war... Trump is an existential threat to our democracy, and President Biden is risking support over the most right-wing extremist government in the history of Israel.

The Socialist Equality Party set up a literature table in the rally hall and distributed a WSWS statement headlined "'Vote Uncommitted': A Democratic, pseudo-left ruse to swindle opponents of genocide into voting for Biden in November." The statement said, in part:

While the Socialist Equality Party fights to develop the anti-genocide protests into a conscious movement of the working class against the government and the capitalist system—the source of inequality, war and fascism—pseudo-left elements respond to the historic breakdown of the capitalist system with cynical political maneuvers aimed at rescuing the Biden campaign and channeling disaffected workers and youth back behind the Democratic Party.

Attendees purchased copies of David North's new book *The Logic of Zionism: From Nationalist Myth to the Gaza Genocide*, as well as recently published WSWS pamphlets explaining the historical origins of the Gaza genocide, detailing the war crimes of the US and Israel and the complicity of the imperialist powers internationally, answering the propaganda lies of Zionism and imperialism, and advancing the fight for an international anti-war movement based in the working class and fighting for socialism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact