

On the election of Donald Trump

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The election of Donald Trump is a critical event in the protracted crisis of American democracy, whose shattering repercussions will be felt throughout the world. A fascist demagogue—who attempted in January 2021 to violently overthrow the last presidential election—has decisively won the 2024 election with both an electoral and popular vote majority. He will be re-installed in the White House in little more than 70 days.

Trump owes his political triumph to the bankruptcy of the Democratic Party, whose fixation with the identity politics of the affluent middle class, arrogant indifference to the devastating impact of inflation on workers' living standards, and unrelenting support for war in Ukraine and genocide in Gaza prepared the ground for the election debacle.

The major pillars of the capitalist press are already attempting to downplay the political implications of Trump's victory. "Mr. Trump's election poses a grave threat," writes the *New York Times*, "but he will not determine the long-term fate of American democracy." The *Times* reassures its readers that Trump will be a lame-duck president because he is barred by the Constitution from seeking another term.

This is wishful thinking. Trump openly proclaimed that this would be the last election, and that his supporters would not have to vote again. The political reality is that the election of Trump sets the stage for an unprecedented wave of social counterrevolution, which he plans to enforce with an iron heel.

Trump has pledged to become "dictator" and deploy the military to crush "the enemy within." He plans to deport 11 million undocumented immigrants, an operation that would require placing major American cities under martial law. He has floated eliminating the income tax and promises to slash taxes for the rich and end corporate regulations. The devastating impact that these policies will have on the working class cannot be overstated.

He is not a political accident. However it was achieved—and this is not to minimize the political complicity of the Democratic Party—the coming to power of a second Trump administration represents the violent realignment of the American political superstructure to correspond with the real social relations that exist in the United States.

Donald Trump speaks not simply as one criminal individual but as the representative of a powerful capitalist oligarchy that has taken shape over the last three to four decades. Mega-millionaires and billionaires—led by the likes of Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Peter Thiel and Larry Ellison—are utilizing Trump to effect in their interests a reactionary restructuring of American society. They will use the time leading up to the January 20 inauguration to prepare the barrage of repressive and socially reactionary measures that

will be unleashed as soon as Trump is once again ensconced in the White House.

He was able to exploit the absence within the political establishment of any articulation of the interests of the vast majority of the population. The Harris campaign was opposed to making any social appeal to the working class. They pitched their campaign to the most affluent voters, promoting hated warmongers like Liz Cheney and promising to place Republicans in the cabinet.

Harris, Barack Obama and other Democratic surrogates traveled the country haranguing voters that a failure to turn out for Harris would be proof of misogyny or racism. They combined incessant appeals to racial and gender identity with full-throated endorsement of war abroad. The Democrats pledged further support for Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza and called for an escalation of the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

The Democrats offered nothing to address the escalating social crisis in the United States, instead presenting the country as "on the right track" to a population which almost unanimously believes the opposite. Figures like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez presented the absurd lie that the Biden-Harris administration had improved conditions for working people and that Harris would challenge the domination of "the billionaire class." Mimicking Hillary Clinton's 2016 claim that the working class consists of "a basket of deplorables," Biden called Trump's supporters "garbage" in the final days of the election.

The vote totals show not a surge in support for Trump, who appears to have lost votes compared to his 2020 totals, but a staggering collapse in support for the Democrats, with Harris winning somewhere between 10 and 15 million fewer votes than Joe Biden in 2020.

Harris underperformed Biden in every single region of the country. The Democratic Party's efforts to cajole various racial and gender groups behind the Harris campaign on the basis of an appeal to identity fell completely flat. Trump saw the largest increase in vote margins in counties where over 50 percent of the population is non-white, and exit poll data shows that Harris lost Latino men nationally by a 54-44 percent margin, a reversal from 2020, when Biden won that demographic by a 59-39 percent margin.

The margin by which the Democrats won young voters also fell substantially from 2020, as countless young people refused to vote for the candidate complicit in the genocide in Gaza. Harris won the youngest voters by only 56-41 percent versus Biden's 65-31 percent margin. Trump won a majority of votes among first-time voters, a sign that the Democrats were unable to activate voters

beyond the affluent upper-middle class.

In fact, Harris improved only among the affluent. Among voters with an income of \$200,000 or more, she won 52-44 percent, reversing a narrow Trump win in that income bracket in 2020. Trump won voters with an income between \$100,000 and \$200,000 in 2020 by a 58-41 percent margin, but Harris won by 53-45 percent. Democrats simultaneously saw a collapse in support from working people, with Harris losing those making between \$30,000 and \$100,000, a wide swath of the population which Biden won by a roughly 57-43 percent margin in 2020.

The electorate was driven by deep social anger. Among the 43 percent of voters who said they were “dissatisfied” with “the way things are going in the country today,” Trump won 54-44 percent. Among the 29 percent who answered that they were “angry,” Trump won 71-27 percent. Harris won 89-10 percent among the tiny sliver of the population who are “enthusiastic” about economic and social conditions today. The total percentage of the population who said their financial situation is “worse” today versus four years ago more than doubled to 45 percent, with Trump winning those voters by an 80-17 percent margin.

Trump and the Republicans are well aware that they will preside over a social powder keg, and that the right-wing policies they plan to implement will only deepen the social anger. Their strategy is to combine massive police state repression with a fascist campaign to scapegoat immigrants for all social ills. Though exit polling does not suggest that voters were taken in by Trump’s vile attacks on immigrants, and though large majorities say they believe immigrants deserve a pathway to citizenship rather than face mass deportation, the stage is set for a massive and violent attack on immigrant workers on a scale that will make even his first administration appear like child’s play.

And while Trump’s demagogic claims to oppose war might have won votes away from the inveterate warmongers in the Democratic Party, Trump is himself a ruthless imperialist politician who advocates escalatory confrontation with China, Iran and North Korea.

The response of the Democrats to Trump’s electoral victory will be to seek compromise and coalition, already evident in Harris’ capitulatory statement Wednesday afternoon. She made no warnings about the dictatorial character of the incoming Trump regime and pledged to cooperate with the transition to the would-be American Führer. The Democrats will shift even further to the right, while seeking to forge an agreement with the Republicans on their central priority, the escalation of war.

The reactionary character of Trump’s political and social program will become clear enough. As the ruling class seeks to restructure the state, there has to be a restructuring of politics, along class lines. As WSWs International Editorial Board Chairman David North wrote, Trump’s election “is the disastrous outcome of the long-term and very deliberate repudiation by the Democratic Party of any programmatic orientation to the working class...

politics, of the sort connected to working class militancy, disappeared. The grievances related to identity displaced any serious concern with the massive concentration of wealth in a small segment of society at the expense of the working class.

Those who have promoted this form of right-wing politics, promoted by the Democratic Party, now resort to the most bankrupt of all responses to the election: blaming the population.

In fact, the past year has seen an explosive growth of political and social opposition, from the mass protests against the genocide in Gaza to a steady growth of strike action by workers, who are striving to break free from the control of the corporatist trade union apparatus. Immense social struggles are on the horizon.

These struggles must be politically directed, and they must be guided by an understanding that fascism can only be stopped by the development of an independent movement of the working class against the source of political reaction and oligarchy: the capitalist system. There must be “a new birth” of genuinely socialist politics, based on the working class and animated by an international strategy.

The Socialist Equality Party, through its presidential election campaign of Joseph Kishore and Jerry White, set out to mobilize the working class on an international, socialist program in opposition to war, inequality and the capitalist system that produces them. This program now takes on an even greater urgency. In the period ahead, the Socialist Equality Party and International Committee of the Fourth International will fight to win the leadership of a growing movement of workers and youth against war, dictatorship and inequality and for the socialist transformation of society.



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In the United States, the new anti-Marxism blended with the longstanding tradition of anti-communism. Left-wing