

The pardon of Hunter Biden and class “justice” in America

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4 December 2024

President Joe Biden’s pardon of his son, Hunter, has evoked widespread anger and disgust. Aside from the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the move, just days before Hunter Biden’s scheduled sentencing for gun law and tax evasion convictions and after countless pledges by the White House not to interfere in the legal process, the move is a political gift to the incoming fascistic administration of Donald Trump.

More fundamentally, it highlights the grotesque chasm that separates “justice” for the working class in capitalist America from the application of law—or lack of it—for the political and corporate elite.

Phrases such as “a government of laws, not men,” and “equality before the law” stand exposed as cynical fictions designed to conceal the brutal reality of the so-called justice system.

There is no question that Joe Biden used his political offices to boost the fortunes of his son, including helping secure a lucrative position for Hunter on the board of the Ukrainian energy firm Burisma in 2014, when, as vice president, Joe Biden was in charge of US policy toward Ukraine.

Nor is there any doubt that Biden’s Republican enemies, led by Trump, used the courts to carry out a politically driven prosecution of Hunter Biden in order to undermine the position of his father.

Trump led this effort, and he has since designated top-level officials for his incoming government who have pledged to go after politicians and even journalists who have opposed him and his dictatorial agenda. These officials include Tom Homan as his “border czar,” who has threatened to jail mayors who interfere with Trump’s plans to deport millions of immigrants. It also includes Pam Bondi for attorney general, who made a name for herself leading chants of “lock her up!” against Hillary Clinton during the 2016 election

campaign.

And there is Kash Patel, Trump’s pick to take over the FBI, who has repeatedly called for the prosecution and jailing of scores of lawmakers, government officials and journalists who opposed Trump’s attempted coup of 2021 and do not support his current plans for dictatorship.

And yet Biden has promised the “smoothest” transition in Trump’s takeover of the White House and Republican control of both houses of Congress and the Supreme Court. The pardoning of his son goes hand in hand with the prostration and complicity of Biden and the Democrats with the government of billionaires, fascists and quacks being assembled by Trump.

There are no pardons for the immigrant workers and students who are about to be rounded up, placed in concentration camps and deported, or for the opponents of police rule, war and genocide who are targeted by Trump as the “enemy within.”

Predictably, Trump seized on the pardon of Hunter Biden to justify his plans to pardon the hundreds of imprisoned fascist insurrectionists who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021. He wrote on his Truth Social platform Sunday night: “Does the Pardon given by Joe to Hunter include the J-6 Hostages, who have now been imprisoned for years? Such an abuse and miscarriage of Justice!”

The fascist Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) wrote on X: “Democrats can spare us the lectures about the rule of law when, say, President Trump nominates Pam Bondi and Kash Patel to clean up this corruption.”

There is one “justice” for the ruling class and something entirely different for workers and poor people. The chasm separating the two has grown in line with the obscene growth of social inequality. In a country where 800 billionaires control over \$6.2 trillion

in wealth, and the top one percent owns 35 percent of all personal wealth while the bottom 50 percent owns just one percent, the so-called justice system reflects and enforces this stark class reality.

- There is a vast prison gulag in the United States populated overwhelmingly by working class and poor people.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, in 2024 some 1.9 million were locked up in the US, with an incarceration rate of 583 per 100,000 residents. This included 448,000 people who had not been convicted but were locked up in local jails. The World Population Review reported in October 2021 that the US had the most incarcerated people of any country in the world and accounted for roughly 25 percent of the world's total prison population. It pointed out that the US prison population had exploded since 1972, when it totaled 200,000.

The systemic brutality to which inmates are subjected is indicated by the situation at Red Onion State Prison in Wise County, Virginia. On November 26, the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus issued a statement declaring that since September 15, at least 12 black men incarcerated at the supermax facility had set themselves on fire “in response to the degrading and inhumane conditions” at the prison. The statement went on to say that people who have been locked up in Red Onion described “being regularly subjected to racial and physical abuse from correctional officers, medical neglect, including the withholding of medicine, excessive stays in solitary confinement with one report of 600 consecutive days, inedible food having been covered with maggots and officers’ spit, and violent dog attacks.”

- Capital punishment continues to take its toll in the United States, one of only 30 percent of countries worldwide that continue the barbaric practice.

The death penalty is banned by all member states of the European Union. According to figures published by the Death Penalty Information Center, 75 US prisoners have been executed under the Biden administration. This includes 22 who have been put to death this year, as of November 21.

- The reality of state repression under the rule of the American corporate oligarchy and its two reactionary parties is reflected in the horrific and unending toll of police killings.

As of October 22, 2024, the number of people killed by police in the US during the Biden administration totaled 4,264, according to figures published by Statista, including 956 so far this year.

Just last week, on Thanksgiving night, Akron, Ohio police shot and killed Jazmir Tucker, a 15-year-old who was out walking. The police claim they heard shots in the area where they saw the ninth-grade high school student, who, they claim, was armed. Body-worn camera footage is due to be released to the public by Thursday.

There is no doubt that this carnage will increase under the second Trump administration, as savage social cuts and mass repression fuel convulsive class struggles. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has declared her wish for the new government's success, and Bernie Sanders has offered to “work with” the incoming administration.



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