

Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez propose “fighting oligarchy” by supporting Democrats, Chuck Schumer, capitalism

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Starting in February 2025, Senator Bernie Sanders, the independent from Vermont who caucuses with the Democratic Party, began hosting a series of campaign-style events across the country as part of his misnamed “Fighting Oligarchy” tour. In the last week of the tour, Sanders was joined by Democratic Party representative and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

The basic purpose of this tour is to channel growing opposition and anger over Trump back into the dead-end of the Democratic Party.

In the wake of Trump’s return to the White House, the Democratic Party has suffered a significant decline in public support. A March 2025 CNN poll found that only 29 percent of Americans view the party favorably—the lowest rating since CNN began the survey in 1992. Similarly, an NBC News poll conducted the same month showed a 27 percent favorability rating, also an all-time low since the network began polling in 1990.

Millions of people who previously considered themselves Democrats are outraged that the party has not mounted any opposition to Trump’s fascist agenda. This is expressed in the very large turnouts for the Sanders’ rallies, including over 30,000 last week in Denver, which Sanders said is the largest turnout he has ever had.

Highlighting the political aims of the campaign, Sanders explained that the tour is specifically targeting “swing” House districts currently held by Republicans and up for election in 2026. In doing so, Sanders is working to build support for the Democratic Party, which is deeply unpopular in the working class.

At the events, Sanders repeated his usual “left” rhetoric alongside a mild and toothless critique of the Democratic Party. Speaking in Denver, he remarked, “I would not be telling you the truth if I didn’t tell you that within the Democratic Party there are billionaires who have undue influence.”

“Democrats,” Sanders added, “have turned their backs on the working people.”

To say the Democrats have “turned their back” on working people implies they were ever a party of the working class. This is the party of Indian Removal, slavery, Jim Crow, the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnam War, Bill Clinton’s dismantling of welfare, Barack Obama’s “Terror

Tuesdays” and record deportations, and now the genocide in Gaza under Biden—who also banned a railroad strike and called for “a strong Republican Party.”

The Democratic Party, the world’s oldest capitalist party, is in no way capable of reforming and “standing with the working class.” The Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are a party of the ruling class and financial oligarchy.

The aim of Sanders is to “put lipstick on the pig,” that is, to somehow revive the credibility of the Democratic Party. As he said in an interview on CNN March 19, “So what we are trying to do is... maybe create a party within the party of bringing millions of young people, of working class people, people of color, to demand that the Democratic Party start standing with the working class of this country.”

Perhaps more significant than what Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez said at the rallies is what they did not say. In Denver, neither made mention of the ongoing attacks on immigrant rights, which is the spearhead of a broader assault on the rights of the entire working class.

This is despite Trump’s unprecedented invocation of the Alien Enemies Act little more than a week ago to deport hundreds of immigrants without due process, defying court orders. Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez also failed to draw attention to the kidnapping and illegal detention of Columbia University student Mamoud Khalil, or the current attempts to deport Cornell University student Momodou Taal just days after he filed a lawsuit against Trump’s unconstitutional executive orders.

The refusal to defend immigrants is not a mistake, but a core element of the nationalist program advanced by Sanders and the trade union apparatus, which is aimed at dividing workers against each other.

In the context of this unprecedented crackdown against immigrant rights, Sanders gave an interview that aired this past Sunday on ABC’s “This Week” in which he praised the Trump administration’s fascist immigrant crackdown.

Asked by ABC’s Jonathan Karl if there was “anything” he thought Trump had “done right?” Sanders replied:

Yea, I mean cracking down on fentanyl, making sure our

borders are stronger. Look, nobody thinks that illegal immigration is appropriate. I happen to think that we need comprehensive immigration reform, but I don't think it's appropriate to have people coming across the border illegally.

Questioned if he thought Biden should have been more aggressive in deporting and preventing immigration to the US, Sanders readily agreed: "He should have done much better, no argument."

Sanders' attacks on immigrants and his support for Trump's assault expose him not only as a reactionary capitalist politician, but as an enemy of the working class worldwide. As Karl Marx wrote, the working class has no country. The struggle against multinational corporations and capitalist state repression can only succeed through the international unity of workers across all borders. Workers in every country face the same class enemy, and their greatest allies are not the capitalists of their own nations, but their fellow workers around the world.

Further exposing the hollow character of the "fighting oligarchy" tour, Sanders has not only defended Trump's fascistic crackdown on immigrants, but has also repeatedly come to the defense of New York Senator Chuck Schumer. Over the past week, Sanders has dismissed growing calls within the Democratic Party for Schumer to step down as Senate minority leader following his vote in favor of the Republicans' modern-day Enabling Act.

In an interview with CNN that aired last Wednesday, Sanders defended the Senator from Wall Street multiple times saying, "I know, everyone is beating up on Chuck, and I strongly disagree with them. Strongly." He added demagogically that the problem was "not Schumer... it's the Democratic Party."

First elected to the House in 1980 and the Senate in 1999, Schumer has played a central role in facilitating oligarchy and inequality in America. In his first year as senator, he voted for the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, which repealed key provisions of the Glass-Steagall Act and helped pave the way for the 2008–09 financial crisis by deregulating Wall Street.

Schumer's top donors in recent years include some of the most powerful forces in finance, law, and the military-industrial complex. He has received major backing from the private equity giant Blackstone, whose billionaire CEO, Stephen Schwarzman, is a close ally of Trump, as well as the corporate law firm Paul, Weiss—now openly collaborating with the Trump administration—and the weapons contractor L3Harris Technologies, which recently partnered with the surveillance firm Palantir, chaired by fascist billionaire and Trump ally Peter Thiel.

On March 20, *Sludge* reported that the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) took in another \$1.3 million from Invariant. Invariant, the top-paid lobbyist for both Elon Musk's SpaceX and Peter Thiel's Palantir, has now bundled nearly \$4 million to the DCCC this year. *Sludge* also noted that Invariant hosted a fundraiser for Senate Democrats last month, sharing a photo of CEO Heather Podesta with Schumer, who appeared to be holding a check.

Sanders plays an indispensable role for the Democratic Party and the ruling class. After every electoral debacle, he reemerges to posture as a "left" alternative, channeling growing discontent into safe, controlled avenues. But time and again—after building a large base of support—he abandons his campaign, endorses the Democratic establishment's chosen candidate, and leaves his disoriented followers vulnerable to right-wing reaction.

This was the case with Hillary Clinton in 2016, Joe Biden in 2020, and again with Biden and Harris in 2024. Now, joined by Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders is reprising the same role. He is not an alternative to the Democratic Party. He is its most vital political safety valve.

While Sanders once called himself a "democratic socialist," his rhetoric today carefully avoids any critique of capitalism. This is no accident. Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez are defenders of American imperialism, the two-party system and the economic order it upholds.

In aligning himself with the Democratic Party, Sanders is propping up a political apparatus that is not resisting Trump's dictatorship, but collaborating in its construction. From the start, the Democrats have helped create the conditions for Trump's rise. Their support for endless war and social austerity has alienated millions. Now, as Trump escalates repression and defies the courts, their primary concern is not democracy at home, but the prosecution of war abroad.

This is made clear in Sanders' own words: "For the first time in our 250-year history, we have a president who is turning his back on democracy and allying us with authoritarianism," he declared earlier this month. "We must not abandon the people of Ukraine... We must always stand for democracy, not dictatorship." In other words, the supposed fight for "democracy" is being tied to full-throated support for the US-NATO war against Russia.

But the working class cannot fight dictatorship by supporting the parties that are responsible for it. The struggle against oligarchy requires a direct confrontation with capitalism and a complete break with all parties and politicians—Democratic, Republican, or self-styled "progressives"—that defend the private ownership of the means of production.

Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez are not fighting oligarchy—they are fighting to smother the growing anger of millions and return it safely to the graveyard of the Democratic Party, which is openly collaborating with Trump and his billionaire backers.

The path forward lies not in reforms or electoral maneuvers, but in the building of a socialist movement of the working class, organized internationally and directed consciously against the capitalist system.



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