

# The political meaning of the April 5 mass protests against Trump

Socialist Equality Party (US)  
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Saturday's mass demonstrations were a turning point in the struggle against the Trump administration's efforts to establish a fascist dictatorship in the United States.

Just under 11 weeks into Trump's second term, millions took to the streets in as many as 1,600 separate protests, from the 100,000 on the Mall in Washington, D.C., to the tens of thousands marching down Fifth Avenue in New York City and protesting in major cities throughout the U.S., to thousands in state capitals like Lansing, Michigan, and Salt Lake City, Utah, to 500 people protesting Forest Service cuts in remote Ketchum, Idaho (population 3,555).

There were substantial protests in regions of the country where Trump won in the elections, including 7,000 in Des Moines, Iowa, where Trump beat Harris by 13.2 percentage points. One thousand marched to the home of fascist "border czar" Tom Homan in Sackets Harbor, New York, in a demonstration centered on opposition to the seizure of an immigrant mother and farm worker, along with her three children.

While the "Hands Off!" demonstrations were initially called by groups around the Democratic Party, the response was largely spontaneous, far exceeding the expectations or the aims of the organizers. Among the tens of thousands of homemade signs denouncing billionaire oligarchs and Elon Musk, few, if any, embraced the Democrats, the supposed opposition party that does nothing to oppose the would-be dictator.

Protesters denounced Trump's fascist attacks on workers, immigrants, social benefits, and democratic rights. There was widespread opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza, which is backed by both the Democrats and Republicans, and open disgust at the cringing performance of Democratic congressional leaders since Trump's inauguration.

The scale of the protests entirely discredits the official political line of the corporate media and the political

representatives of big business—in both the Democratic and Republican parties—that Trump is a political colossus who cannot be challenged.

Trump's actions during the first 76 days of his second presidency are massively unpopular, with large majorities opposing the mass firings of federal workers, the cuts in social spending, and his onslaught against democratic rights, particularly directed against immigrant workers and international students protesting Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Many of those who voted for Trump are confronting the reality of a government of the oligarchy. The fascist president's "approval" rating has plunged even before the impact has been felt from his April 2 decision to launch a trade war against the entire world. The latest Reuters/Ipsos poll, conducted before the White House's imposition of tariffs on all imports, found Trump's approval at 42 percent, with only 22 percent feeling the US was headed in the "right direction."

Under these conditions, the Democrats declare that nothing can be done. Trump, according to them—with his five-seat majority in the House and three-seat majority in the Senate, among the narrowest party margins of "control" of Washington in modern history—cannot be defeated.

The truth is, however, that the Democrats do not want to defeat him. Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer led a group of Democrats to cast the decisive votes to pass a resolution to fund the federal government on Trump's terms for the next six months.

There are two opposing class-based responses to Trump. On the one hand, there is the growing opposition to Trump's attacks on social programs, democratic rights, immigrants, and his support for the genocide in Gaza. On the other hand, there is the opposition of sections of the ruling class, for which the Democrats speak, which agree on Trump's assault on social programs and are opposed

to him primarily on foreign policy issues—particularly Trump’s deviations from the war against Russia in Ukraine.

The response of the Democratic Party to Saturday’s mass turnout is one of shock and nervousness, even horror. They are frightened above all by the prospect of a mass movement against Trump from below, in which millions of working people become politically mobilized and seek to take action to defend their jobs, living standards, and democratic rights.

The corporate media has the same response and is presently working to cover up what actually happened. The print edition of the *New York Times* acknowledged the protest—which filled 20 blocks of Fifth Avenue—in a single front-page photo, with the actual report relegated to page 16. The *Washington Post* published nothing at all on its front page, placing its report, under the headline, “Rally draws thousands to protest Trump,” in its Metro section, reserved for local news. The protests went virtually unreported on the Sunday interview programs on network and cable television.

The apologists and accomplices of the Democrats, like the Democratic Socialists of America and other pseudo-left groups, will have an equally sick feeling in their stomachs about the scale and intensity of the protests. Their role is to channel opposition behind the Democratic Party, utilizing the bankrupt politics of racial and gender identity, while promoting the apparatus of the trade unions.

In a few of the major cities where rallies were held, such as Washington, Chicago, and Los Angeles, the speakers’ platform was dominated by Democratic Party members of Congress and leaders of the public employee unions. They had nothing to offer in terms of a program for fighting Trump. In other cities, including New York and Detroit, there were no speakers at all, an even more open expression of political bankruptcy.

In contrast, there was a powerful response among thousands of protesters of all ages and backgrounds to the political perspective advanced by the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, wherever we intervened. Our statement denouncing the Democrats and the union bureaucracy resonated broadly, as did our call to unify the working class internationally against war, dictatorship, and the assault on living standards.

But while the outpouring of opposition revealed the deep hostility to Trump and the capitalist system he represents, the movement that took to the streets on April

5 remains at an early stage. As of yet, it lacks a clear political program or organizational expression. The working class has not intervened in the situation as an independent and conscious force. Under conditions in which the union apparatus supports Trump and the Democratic Party offers no real opposition, the emergence of mass resistance has taken an initial and largely spontaneous form.

However, this very spontaneity underscores the urgency of political clarification. The working class must be armed with an understanding of the real nature of fascism—not as an individual aberration but as the product of the historic breakdown of the capitalist system. The enemy is not only Trump and the Republicans, but the entire capitalist state, including the Democratic Party, the union bureaucracy, and the financial oligarchy that rules America.

The fight against fascism must become a conscious fight against capitalism itself. It requires a mass movement of the working class for the expropriation of the oligarchs, the establishment of workers’ power, and the reorganization of society on the basis of social need, not private profit.

This fight must be international. The conditions facing workers in the US are mirrored in every country: inequality, authoritarianism, and war. Just as the capitalist system is global, the struggle to overthrow it must be global. Workers in the United States must unite with their class brothers and sisters around the world in a common struggle to end capitalism and build socialism.

That is the program and perspective fought for by the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality. We urge all those who took part in Saturday’s demonstrations to take up this fight. Join the SEP! Build the leadership needed to prepare the working class for the battles to come.



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