

Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez resume fraudulent “Fighting Oligarchy” tour in Los Angeles

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A crowd estimated at 36,000 rallied Saturday in downtown Los Angeles, California in the latest iteration of the “Fighting Oligarchy” tour headlined by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and Democratic Socialists of America Democrat, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York.

One week after the April 5 nationwide protests—when millions demonstrated against Trump’s anti-immigrant dragnet, fascist repressive measures, attacks on federal workers and social programs, and tariff war—tens of thousands showed up again in Los Angeles.

The mood was militant and angry. Students, immigrants, workers and entire families participated. Their opposition was fueled by the failure of all official institutions—Congress, the courts, the Democratic Party and the trade union bureaucracy—to oppose Trump’s erection of a dictatorship.

The event was heavily promoted by the Los Angeles chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). In addition to these two headliners, numerous Democratic politicians and trade union bureaucrats were afforded speaking slots. Over half a dozen musical acts performed, including Joan Baez, Maggie Philips and Neil Young.

Democrats who spoke included Washington Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Florida Rep. Maxwell Frost and California Reps. Jimmy Gomez and Ro Khanna. Bureaucrats from United Here Local 11, the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA), the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), the California Nurses Association (CNA), the National Nurses Association (NNA), the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), the United Auto Workers (UAW), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the California Labor Federation AFL-CIO also spoke.

No speaker sought to explain why none of the unions have organized a strike in response to the attacks of the Trump administration—from mass federal worker layoffs, to cuts in social programs, to the disappearance of immigrant workers and international students.

Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez are being heavily promoted by the corporate press. Following the massive April 5 protests, which the media largely ignored, the senator was afforded a prime-time, hour-long “town hall” with CNN’s Anderson Cooper this past Wednesday.

The organizers of Saturday’s event issued guidelines barring homemade protest signs.

Countless attendees brought signs anyway, many of them condemning not only Trump, but the Democratic Party as well. Others bore slogans of solidarity with immigrant students being punished for speaking out against US policies, particularly Washington’s support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

The scale of the April 5 protests struck fear not only in the Trump administration, but also in the Democratic Party, which is terrified that opposition from below will spill out of its control.

While the desire to fight within the crowd was palpable, the political perspective offered by the official speakers was a recipe for disaster. Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and the others advanced the dead-end strategy of voting for Democrats or pro-Democratic “independents.” This was coupled with the promotion of the bureaucratized unions such as the UAW, whose president, Shawn Fain, is stumping for Trump’s tariffs and drive to World War III with China.

The basic lie advanced by Sanders, et al at these events is that one can “fight oligarchy” without overturning the system that creates inequality and oligarchy, capitalism. While many speakers blamed “greed,” “white supremacy,” or, in the case of Sanders, the 2010 *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling for the growth of oligarchy, none pointed to the historic breakdown of the capitalist system. This crisis is not rooted in a single court decision or the deranged mind of Trump, but in the declining world economic position of American imperialism.

Unable to peacefully extricate itself from over \$36 trillion in government debt, the US ruling class, with Trump and Elon Musk at the forefront, is ripping up the Constitution and democratic rights in order to carry out a massive assault on the social conditions of the working class as it prepares for war against its “global competitors.”

In her remarks, Ocasio-Cortez declared:

We need a Democratic Party that fights harder for us... we need fighting Democrats that know how to stand with the working class. Replace Republicans with a brawling Democrat who will stand for the people of California!

As examples of “fighting Democrats,” Ocasio-Cortez praised California Senators Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff, both of whom are staunch advocates of the US-NATO war against Russia in

Ukraine. Padilla has voted in favor of over \$100 billion in war funding to Ukraine since February 2022.

Sanders began his remarks by thanking the trade union bureaucrats and musicians who participated. He said the numerous musical interludes were there:

Not just to entertain you. It is more than that. We are going to make our revolution with joy. We are going to sing and dance our way to victory against hatred and divisiveness.

In his remarks, Sanders failed to name any of the immigrants or students who have been abducted or hounded by the immigration Gestapo in the last three months, including Mohmoud Khalil, Momodou Taal, Rumeysa Ozturk and Kilmar Abrego Garcia.

This is not an oversight. Sanders, an economic nationalist who supports tariffs against “enemies” such as China, and the nationalist trade union bureaucracies, in line with Trump’s “America First” agenda, oppose open borders and seek to line up workers behind their “own” capitalist rulers in the global war for markets, natural resources and sources of cheap labor.

As at previous “Fighting Oligarchy” rallies, Sanders advanced a false history in which America was a democratic garden of Eden before the serpent Trump slithered his way to the top.

He declared:

For the first time in our 250-year history, we have a president who is aligning himself with dictatorship abroad. No, Mr. Trump, Ukraine did not start the war, Putin and Russia did. We must lead the world in supporting democracies, not supporting Putin and dictatorship.

This is a flat out lie that omits the scores of wars and coups carried out by Democratic and Republican administrations alike that killed millions, overthrew elected governments and installed fascist dictatorships, from Chile, Argentina and Brazil to Indonesia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and many more countries. The Ukrainian regime that the US and NATO have backed against Russia is itself riddled with neo-Nazis who celebrate the World War II collaboration of Stepan Bandera with Hitler’s Holocaust against the Jews of Ukraine.

As he does in every speech, Sanders covered for the role of the US government in backing the Israeli genocide in Gaza. He castigated “Netanyahu’s war machine” while in the same breath declaring, “Israel has a right to defend itself against terrorism.”

Sanders concluded his remarks with ringing praise for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He remained silent on FDR’s attacks on immigrants and democratic rights, including his invocation of the Alien Enemies Act to imprison tens of thousands of Japanese-Americans.

Sanders also failed to mention the use of the McCarthyite

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 by Secretary of State Marco Rubio to detain and deport students opposed to genocide. Earlier this year, Sanders, along with every Democrat in the Senate, voted to approve Rubio as secretary of state.

In contrast to the official speakers, rally goers were very open to taking the fight to both parties and the system they defend. Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed 1,500 leaflets opposing the fascistic attacks on immigrants and students, which have been facilitated by the Democratic Party.

Speaking to the WSWWS, Jack, a community college student said,

I’m here to fight the oligarchy.

One of the most important things for me is that Elon Musk, the whole Trump administration, Republicans, not just Musk, are destroying Social Security, Medicaid. I am disabled, I rely on these Social Security checks and Medicaid.

You can’t reform capitalism, we just need to get rid of it. It is not working for the people... Both of the parties are parties of big business.

Eric, a student studying political science at Long Beach City College, explained:

This is turning into a full-on autocracy... Trump is practicing Project 2025, the unitary executive theory. He is taking away the separation of powers in order to make himself a tyrant.

Asked by WSWWS reporter what the Democrats have done in response, Eric replied, “Absolutely nothing,” adding,

There was a chance for Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. They had a bill that needed to be passed or there was going to be a government shutdown. Schumer provided the votes... and as a result we are still having the government going as the Republicans had wanted.

Arturo, a community college student and grocery store worker admitted, “I have my differences with Bernie.” He added, “Free Palestine all the way. It saddens me all the time to hear any politician side with Israel.”



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