Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Shawn Fain endorse Zohran Mamdani for New York City mayor

Daniel de Vries
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Two prominent "left"-talking supporters of the Democratic Party have backed the campaign of Zohran Mamdani, a state legislator and member of the Democratic Socialists of America, to win the Democratic nomination for New York City mayor.

On Thursday morning, US Representative from New York and fellow DSA member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez endorsed Mamdani. This piggy-backs on an endorsement earlier in the week from the United Auto Workers (UAW) union and its president, Shawn Fain.

Early voting begins on June 14, with the Democratic primary election held on June 24. Incumbent Democratic Mayor Eric Adams is not seeking the Democratic Party nomination, choosing instead to run for reelection as an independent, with the tacit support of would-be dictator Donald Trump.

These high-profile endorsements in a crowded field of candidates come as Mamdani has emerged as the top challenger to former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, in terms of poll numbers, fundraising and campaign volunteers.

New York's ranked-choice voting, which allows voters to list candidates in order of preference, means that Cuomo cannot win the nomination with the plurality he is likely to receive, but must gain the second-choice support of other candidates. Already one of the nine candidates who participated in a debate last Wednesday, state senator Jessica Ramos, has dropped out and endorsed Cuomo.

Mamdani has separated himself from a handful of previously better-known "anti-Cuomo" candidates by appealing to the widespread anger over the rising cost of living and extreme social inequality, as well as disgust with the Democratic Party for the genocide in Gaza. Mamdani has pledged rent freezes, free childcare, expanded and free bus service, and reduced grocery bills funded by taxes on corporations and the wealthy. How this could be accomplished through the Democratic Party, a political instrument of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, he never explains.

In an interview with the *New York Times* announcing the endorsement, Ocasio-Cortez claimed, "Mamdani has demonstrated a real ability on the ground to put together a coalition of working-class New Yorkers that is strongest to lead the pack." She added, "In the final stretch of the race, we need to get very real about that."

However, Mamdani, Ocasio-Cortez and their allies aim to build a coalition not for the purpose of mobilizing the working class to fight for its class interests but rather to contain the growing opposition and bury it in the graveyard of social movements, the Democratic Party. When they speak of a coalition of the working class, they have in mind the trade union functionaries like UAW chief Shawn Fain, not rank-and-file workers who are objectively coming into conflict with the bureaucratic apparatus.

In his endorsement of Mamdani, Fain highlighted the candidate's support for the bureaucracy on "countless UAW picket lines," adding that Mamdani has "fought for better wages, for our livelihoods, and for a livable city for UAW members." Fain criticized Cuomo for refusing to sign a bill guaranteeing unemployment insurance to strikers. "In 2023, when UAW members engaged in the historic Stand Up Strike, with the support of nearly every politician and 80% of Americans, Cuomo again was nowhere to be seen," the statement added.

While Cuomo's anti-worker record is beyond dispute, the UAW bureaucracy itself played a primary role in sabotaging the autoworkers' struggle in 2023. Fain rebuffed widespread demands by the rank-and-file for an all-out strike, instead calling a series of isolated walkouts at individual plants, limiting the economic damage to automakers and hashing out a sellout agreement that now threatens mass plant closures and perpetuates deadly working conditions.

Meanwhile, Fain has made the promotion of economic nationalism a top priority of his administration, publicly backing Donald Trump's trade war and offering up autoworkers to manufacture military equipment in preparation for war. Fain hailed Trump's "Liberation Day" tariff plan, proclaiming, "We are glad to see an American president take aggressive action on ending the free trade disaster."

Fain's support for Trump's trade war has been cited repeatedly by the president, drawing the logical conclusion. "I assume Fain is going to probably now say—the next thing he can

say is, 'I endorse this guy [Trump]. He's the greatest I've ever seen,'" Trump said in an interview with NBC in May.

There is widespread outrage among autoworkers at Fain's promotion of Trump and his reactionary "America First" program. The trade war has already led to a wave of plant closures and temporary layoffs. Job losses or shutdowns have been announced across North America, including at Volvo/Mack plants in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, Stellantis plants in Michigan, Indiana, and Ontario, and GM plants and suppliers in Tennessee and Ontario.

With Fain increasingly discredited, the endorsement of Mamdani is an effort to salvage his "left" credentials, making common cause with the DSA and other layers of the Democratic Party that supported his campaign for UAW president in the illegitimate union elections in 2022 and 2023.

Mamdani's response to Fain's endorsement is also highly revealing. "Few have fought the oligarchy and stood up for the working class quite like @ShawnFainUAW and the men and women of @UAW. Andrew Cuomo is for the billionaires. Our campaign is for you. Let's win this together," the candidate wrote on X.

In glorifying a union bureaucrat who is collaborating with the billionaire Trump and his gang of criminal oligarchs, Mamdani is aligning himself with a reactionary eruption of American national-chauvinism. He is attempting to "broaden" his base of support by reaching out to the union bureaucracy, not to the working class. What all these forces fear, above all, is the prospect of the working class organizing independently, unbound by the limits imposed by the union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party.

Far from opposing the billionaires that support Andrew Cuomo, Mamdani is seeking to convince a section of them that his election is in their best interests. Mamdani's performance at last Wednesday's debate, both in what he said and didn't say, demonstrated his orientation to the ruling class. On issue after issue, he lined up solidly with his fellow Democrats, at times indistinguishable from them, denouncing Trump for "gross overreach" and pledging to stand up to the president.

On the topic of "antisemitism"—the fraudulent smear aimed at suppressing opposition to the genocide in Gaza—Mamdani continued to try to have it both ways. He appeases the Democratic establishment by not criticizing the smear campaign, while simultaneously making an appeal to the widespread disgust over the US-backed mass slaughter of Palestinians.

Near the end of the debate, Mamdani was ambushed by the NBC moderators demanding to know if he would visit Israel as mayor and if he believes in a Jewish state of Israel. Mamdani responded with a nod to the Zionists, reaffirming Israel's supposed "right to exist" while avoiding the question of whether it should exist as a Jewish state (with an oppressed and persecuted Palestinian minority, or even majority).

Earlier in the night, several candidates jumped at the opportunity to absurdly portray Columbia University and New York City more broadly as experiencing a 20-month-long antisemitic rampage, an American equivalent of Hitler's Kristallnacht. Mamdani's response was to avoid confronting the antisemitism slander, sticking instead to safe criticisms of Trump exceeding his authority by attacking Columbia and attempting to deport graduate student protest leader Mahmoud Khalil.

Mamdani's remarks demonstrate that whatever his criticisms, he accepts the entire rotten framework of US capitalism and the limits set by the Democrats and Republicans. This extends far beyond the phony use of antisemitism to justify the genocide in Gaza. As Mamdani presents it, the growing poverty and inequality, the attacks on democratic rights, and the danger of war and genocide are not outcomes of a capitalist system in rapid decay but of the failures of corrupt politicians. His campaign is fundamentally aimed at disorienting and confusing workers and youth who are becoming radicalized and tying them to the Democratic Party with illusions that capitalism is viable.

Just hours after the debate, Ocasio-Cortez announced her endorsement of Mamdani. The mayoral candidate responded with hopes to follow in her footsteps. "In 2018, she shocked the world and transformed our politics. On June 24, with @AOC's support and this movement behind us, we will do the same," Mamdani posted on X.

Far from a rallying cry, this should be taken as a warning. Ocasio-Cortez's record is one of enthusiastically backing "Genocide Joe" for reelection, voting to ban a strike by rail workers, and denouncing left-wing critics of the Biden administration as sectarian while leading supporters to a political dead end that enabled Trump's reelection.

The situation facing working people in New York City and beyond has hardly been more dire. Millions of residents cannot afford the cost of living. Trump's fascistic assault on immigrants is ripping communities apart. Funding for schools, healthcare and libraries—and the jobs that come with it—are threatened while the Democrats and Republicans harness unlimited resources for war.

The political and class forces behind Cuomo, no less Trump, cannot be defeated via Mamdani and the Democratic Party. Workers and young people must draw the necessary conclusions that the Democrats are part of the problem, and the working class must come forward under its own banner and fight for its own class interests.