

After the “No Kings” protests: What Next?

Socialist Equality Party (US)
20 October 2025

Saturday’s “No Kings” demonstrations, which drew an estimated 7 million people into the streets across the United States in the largest mass protests in American history, gave powerful expression to the growing popular opposition to the Trump administration’s conspiracy to establish a dictatorship. The White House reeks of fascism, and millions of people have caught the stench.

For those who marched or supported the protests, one question now poses itself with burning urgency: What next?

The mass protests are only the beginning of an expanding movement against the Trump regime. But for this movement to go forward, the demonstrations must be critically evaluated and placed within the context of the overall political situation. The danger is that, without the articulation of a clear perspective, the enormous popular impulse of opposition will be dissipated.

It is first of all necessary to understand that the demonstrations themselves, however massive, will not stop Trump’s drive toward dictatorship. The president’s own response, in the promotion of AI-generated videos depicting himself dumping feces on protesters, was both vile and violent. It expressed the contempt of a criminal regime for the population.

Trump speaks not as an individual but as the political representative of a class, the capitalist oligarchy. Confronted with mounting economic, geopolitical and domestic crises, the ruling elite has drawn the conclusion that the preservation of its wealth and privileges is incompatible with democratic forms of rule.

This reality was underscored two days after the demonstrations, when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that the White House could proceed with the deployment of National Guard troops to Portland, Oregon, under the absurd pretense that the city is a “war zone.” The decision makes clear that Trump’s drive toward dictatorship rests on the active collaboration of the state apparatus, including the courts and the military.

What was most clearly absent from the protests was a defined program upon which this government can be opposed. The declaration “No Kings” expresses a democratic sentiment that is very broadly felt, but in and of

itself it is an abstraction in that it does not define how the drive to dictatorship is to be stopped. This weakness reflects both the as yet low level of historical and political consciousness among broad sections of the population and the fact that the demonstrations remained, however tenuously, under the political control of the Democratic Party and its affiliates.

It must be stated bluntly that any subordination of this movement to the Democratic Party will prove fatal—absolutely fatal—to the struggle against Trump’s fascistic conspiracies. The Democratic Party is, and has always been, a capitalist party. Historically, it has functioned as the “graveyard of social movements,” the place where popular opposition is defanged and buried. This is all the more true today, when the Democrats act not as opponents of the Trump administration, but as its collaborators and enablers.

This includes figures like Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, the senator from Wall Street, who joined a march in New York City after weeks of doing everything in his power to cover up the Trump administration’s escalating conspiracy for dictatorship. It was Schumer who earlier this year played the central role in securing the passage of the budget resolution that guaranteed funding for Trump’s government.

More politically pernicious, however, are individuals such as Bernie Sanders, who was brought in to deliver the main address at the demonstration in Washington D.C. The role of Sanders (and many others, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Zohran Mamdani and other members of the Democratic Socialists of America) is to conceal the absence of any genuine program to oppose Trump with empty demagoguery, that is, political deceit disguised as radicalism.

Nothing in Sanders’ speech addressed the real causes of the present crisis. There was not a trace of analysis, not a single reference to capitalism or socialism and not one word about how the criminal Trump government is to be driven from office, which is the basic question. Instead, he appealed to his “Republican colleagues” to “start negotiating” and not let “the American healthcare system be destroyed.” In a different time, would he call on his “Nazi colleagues” not to

neglect Social Security?

The basic deceit is the claim that it is possible to oppose Trump and the growth of fascism through the Democratic Party, and without opposing the capitalist system that gives rise to them. But this is the fundamental issue. As the Socialist Equality Party explained in its statement to the “No Kings” protests, “The entire historical experience of the 1930s demonstrated that the fight against fascism cannot be separated from the struggle against capitalism and for socialism.”

The aim of the Democrats and their affiliated organizations is to block any movement of social protest from developing a political program and direction that threatens capitalism. Their goal is to let off steam and divert popular opposition behind their own pro-imperialist political agenda. Those involved in the protests and seeking a way to stop Trump’s conspiracy cannot allow this to happen.

The Socialist Equality Party intervened in the October 18 demonstrations to fight for a socialist program and political perspective. Supporters distributed tens of thousands of copies of the SEP’s statement “No Kings, No Nazi Führers! Mobilize the working class against Trump’s dictatorship!” at protests across the United States and internationally, along with the party’s pamphlet, *Trump’s Fascist Conspiracy and How to Fight It: A Socialist Strategy*.

The SEP’s intervention aimed to transform a spontaneous outpouring of anger into a conscious political movement, armed with a strategy for the mobilization of the working class against fascism and capitalism.

The response to the SEP’s intervention revealed an unmistakable political fact: There exists within the population an immense, deeply felt opposition to dictatorship, inequality and war; broad opposition to the Democratic Party; and a growing receptivity to a socialist program. Workers, students and young people who spoke to SEP campaigners wanted to understand not only *why* this crisis has developed but *what must be done* to stop it.

To return to the question: What next? The answer is to develop an offensive for socialism in the working class. While many workers participated in the demonstrations, they did so primarily as individuals. This is due in large part to the absolutely pernicious role played by the union apparatus, which functions entirely as a mechanism of the suppression of class struggle.

The working class has not yet intervened as an organized force, with its own program. This must change. The central target of all the Trump administration’s actions is the working class. It is workers who are being thrown into unemployment by the mass firing of federal employees, who face the destruction of vital social programs, and who will suffer from the elimination of the Department of Education

and the escalating attacks on teachers.

The dismantling of public health has driven conditions for healthcare workers to the breaking point, while Trump’s trade war policies have fueled soaring inflation that is wiping out living standards. And it is the working class that will be used as cannon fodder in the escalating global war.

When Trump speaks of the “enemy within,” he is giving voice to the fears of the capitalist oligarchy of the working class. And when he denounces “socialism” and “Marxism” with ever-greater hysteria, he is articulating the terror of the billionaires that the masses of workers and youth in the United States and internationally will turn consciously to a revolutionary program aimed at abolishing the capitalist system.

There is a growing mood of social opposition and protest throughout the United States and internationally. The task now is not to wait passively for the next demonstration but to use this opposition as a lever in the fight for a movement of the working class for socialism.

The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the fight to build rank-and-file committees in every workplace as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and to develop within the working class a conscious socialist movement, strategically aligned and organizationally connected with the developing struggles of the global working class.

Opposition to dictatorship can only go forward to the extent that it is rooted in the social and political struggles of the working class, based on an internationalist socialist strategy. The defense of democracy is impossible without the development of a socialist movement to end capitalism and place the wealth of society under the democratic control of the working class itself.

We call on all those who agree with this program to join the Socialist Equality Party.



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