

At election rally, DSA candidate Mamdani embraces right-wing Democratic Party establishment

Erik Schreiber
28 October 2025

New York Democratic mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), held a campaign rally on Sunday that underscored his unity with the right-wing party establishment. During the event, the top three state party officials, including pro-business Governor Kathy Hochul, promoted Mamdani and received his support. Mamdani demonstratively raised Hochul's hand in the midst of hostile heckling of her from the audience.

In boosting Mamdani, these Democrats made common cause with supposed "progressives" Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who joined Mamdani at the rally. This collaboration belied any leftist rhetoric coming from the stage.

With early voting already underway, and election day, November 4, a week away, polls show Mamdani with a double-digit lead over former governor Andrew Cuomo, who is running as an independent, and Curtis Sliwa, the Republican candidate.

The rally was held at Forest Hills Stadium in Queens, which has a capacity of 13,000. The large attendance at the rally, like Mamdani's victory in the Democratic primary, reflected New Yorkers' anger over the cost-of-living crisis, attacks on immigrants and President Trump's moves toward dictatorship.

Mamdani's primary victory was a rejection of the party establishment, which is increasingly seen as a tool of the financial elite and despised for its refusal to defend democratic rights. But it is precisely this party Mamdani and the DSA seek to bolster by posing as its "left-wing" face. Mamdani's supporters who are looking for a way to fight must be warned that the candidate is laying a political trap.

Hochul, who appeared on stage only briefly, embodies the Democrats' increasingly right-wing orientation. In 2021 she endorsed the now thoroughly discredited Eric Adams for New York City mayor. As governor, Hochul has defended corporate interests, ended an eviction moratorium and

collaborated with Adams to deploy the National Guard to conduct random bag checks in New York City subways. After Trump's election, Hochul demonstratively called up the aspiring dictator to congratulate him.

Hochul has promised to reject any proposal to fund universal childcare (which is one of Mamdani's main campaign promises) by raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy. Her recent endorsement of Mamdani is based on his reassurances that he will not seriously challenge big business.

Seeking to strike a militant tone, Hochul said Trump and the Republicans were attacking food assistance, healthcare and infrastructure projects, which she falsely called Democratic priorities. But the governor was quickly and repeatedly disrupted by loud chants of "Tax the rich!" Hochul struggled to finish her speech in the face of this defiant heckling.

Coming to her rescue, Mamdani walked onstage, took Hochul's hand and raised it in the air, demonstrating his support for the right-wing governor and appealing to his followers to support her as well. More than any words he later uttered, this gesture exposed the fraudulence of Mamdani's professed "socialism."

After Hochul left the stage, State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie spoke briefly, trying mainly to avoid being heckled. State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins attempted to appeal to the crowd by recalling that she had protested for childcare as a young mother decades ago. She acknowledged that childcare is still not accessible, but failed to explain her own role as a state senator in this situation.

Representative Ocasio-Cortez, the most prominent DSA member in Congress, gave a demagogic speech that omitted essential details. She blasted former governor Cuomo as a representative of the political establishment and the billionaires who fund him. This is correct, but she failed to mention that Hochul faithfully served as Cuomo's lieutenant governor and that Heastie and Stewart-Cousins collaborated

with Cuomo in the state legislature. Similarly, Ocasio-Cortez declared that a vote for Mamdani would send the message that “Trump’s authoritarianism is no good here.” But she failed to explain how Mamdani would resist it—or how she herself was resisting it.

While campaigning for Mamdani, Ocasio-Cortez is also raising funds for Abigail Spanberger, a Democrat and former Central Intelligence Agency officer who is running for governor of Virginia. As a congresswoman from Virginia, Spanberger supported Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians, called for more immigration agents to be deployed to the southern border and attacked protesters against police brutality. During her speech, Ocasio-Cortez shouted about the defense of workers and immigrants, but her fundraising for Spanberger exposes her role as a supporter and accomplice of US imperialism.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders gave his usual stump speech, decrying the “oligarchs” and the crises of poverty and homelessness that afflict not only New York, but the entire country. He endorsed Mamdani’s calls for universal childcare, a rent freeze and free buses, but did not say how these modest measures would be funded in a city that is subordinated to the interests of Wall Street. As always, Sanders did not mention capitalism, which is the cause of the affordability crisis and the staggering levels of inequality that he denounced.

The most significant part of Sanders’ speech began when the former mayor of Burlington, Vermont said that “being mayor is not an easy job.” Mamdani “will not have all the answers,” Sanders admonished, adding, “Zohran is going to need your help every single day.” He urged the crowd to “do everything you can to work with Zohran.” With these statements, Sanders effectively acknowledged that the candidate inevitably would betray his supporters, and urged them to support him anyway.

Sanders himself has a history of betrayals. Most recently, he told right-wing podcaster and Trump supporter Tim Dillon that “Trump did a better job” than President Biden in securing the southern border. Sanders is calling on Trump and his fascist Republican “colleagues” to negotiate so that the federal shutdown can be ended and the government can be reopened. Such negotiations will only mean further concessions by the Democrats and a further rightward shift in official politics.

In his speech, Mamdani repeated his campaign promises of a rent freeze, universal childcare and free buses. He spoke vaguely about hiring more teachers and improving infrastructure. But he said nothing about how he would fund any of these initiatives in the face of political opposition, including from Hochul and the Democratic Party leadership.

Despite this opposition, Mamdani declared himself the

nominee of a “reinvigorated” Democratic Party. He invoked President Franklin D. Roosevelt and promised that the Democrats would again offer “big ideas.”

These remarks follow from Mamdani’s political mission, which is to sow illusions that this party of finance capital, the military and the intelligence agencies can be pressured into enacting major social reforms. Mamdani is striving to prevent left-moving workers and young people from breaking with this capitalist party and challenging the entire political and economic system. His endorsement by Hochul and other right-wing Democrats reflects their belief that he can be useful in this regard.

But Mamdani’s speech was just as revealing for what he didn’t say. He said nothing about the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids that have been intensifying across the country, including in New York. He made no mention of the possibility that Trump will deploy the National Guard to the city. Nor did he note that Trump has threatened to withhold federal funding from New York if Mamdani becomes mayor. The candidate said nothing about these threats or how he would respond to them. He did not address Trump’s far advanced efforts to establish a dictatorship.

These omissions are a deliberate effort to politically disarm workers and young people who are being radicalized by the intensifying crisis.

At the rally, supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed nearly 1,000 copies of a statement titled, “The fight against dictatorship cannot be waged through the Democratic Party.” Attendees had contradictory opinions. Many supported Mamdani but expressed hostility to the Democratic Party, which is coalescing around his candidacy.

None of the urgent economic and political issues facing New York City, or the country as a whole, can be addressed by supporting Mamdani and the Democrats. These issues arise from the deep crisis of capitalism and require workers and young people to break from the Democrats and their pseudo-left satellites such as the DSA. The fight against inequality and fascism requires the independent mobilization of the working class in a conscious struggle for socialism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact