

Mamdani intervenes to quash primary challenge to Hakeem Jeffries

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At the urging of Zohran Mamdani, the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America voted against endorsing a primary run by one of its own members, Chi Ossé, to unseat House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

The outcome, announced Sunday evening, is further evidence that Mamdani and the DSA are providing an essential political service to the ruling class, lending an air of political legitimacy to an establishment that is increasingly discredited and despised by the population. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, another member of the DSA, has also thrown her support behind Jeffries.

Jeffries, as the leader of the Democratic Party in the House of Representatives, epitomizes the establishment that Mamdani postured as an opponent of during his campaign. Jeffries' record is one of accommodation to both corporate power and imperialist war, including backing the genocide in Gaza and leading the Democrats' capitulation to Trump. This is the politics that voters in New York rejected when they turned out for Zohran Mamdani.

In the run-up to the election, Jeffries pointedly withheld an endorsement of the winner of the party's primary for months until the eve of voting, when it was apparent that Mamdani could not be beaten. Jeffries finally formally backed Mamdani after the candidate announced his intention to retain the current New York Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner Jessica Tisch, a move meant to reassure the city's corporate and financial elite, foreshadowing his rapid shift to the right.

In the three weeks since emerging victorious in the election, Mamdani's embrace of his stated political opponents in the Democratic establishment, as well as President Trump, has proceeded at warp speed. Two

days before he met with Trump at the White House, Mamdani appeared at the New York City DSA Electoral Working Group meeting to put down the potential challenge to Jeffries.

"The choice is not whether to vote for Chi or Hakeem at the ballot box," Mamdani asserted at the event. "The choice is how to spend the next year. Do we want to spend it defending caricatures of our movement, or do we want to spend it fulfilling the agenda at the heart of that very same movement?" Mamdani urged DSA members to deny Ossé their endorsement.

The core of Mamdani's argument is that the orientation must be towards convincing the Democratic Party power brokers and the corporate-financial interests they represent to accept a few modest concessions like free childcare, a partial rent freeze and free buses. Accompanying this appeal is a commitment to prevent an open struggle against their stranglehold on economic and political power. Even so much as a primary challenge is off limits, to say nothing of mobilizing masses in a class-based struggle to confront the impossible social conditions that exist throughout New York City and elsewhere.

In fact, the eruption of working class struggle is precisely what Mamdani and the DSA aim to prevent, using the lie that the Democrats, a party of Wall Street, can be pressured into becoming a vehicle for addressing the needs of the working class.

The New York City DSA announced the results of the endorsement vote on Sunday: 52 percent of members voted against endorsing Ossé, 46 percent voted in favor, and 2 percent abstained. Ossé, who is currently a city councilmember, said shortly afterwards that he has no intention of challenging Jeffries without the DSA's support.

Mamdani, however, went further than simply

preventing a primary challenge to Jeffries. In an appearance Sunday on *Meet the Press*, the mayor-elect said he supported Jeffries to remain House speaker in the next Congress.

That statement is a striking reversal of Mamdani's previous position. "After at least 2,251 Palestinians were killed over the course of July 2014," Mamdani wrote on Twitter in 2022, prior to the US-backed genocide in Gaza, "Hakeem Jeffries got on stage at a rally in NYC and paraphrased George Wallace. 'Israel today, Israel tomorrow, Israel forever.' If Jeffries is considered a progressive, the term has lost all meaning."

Mamdani's support for Jeffries was eclipsed by the extraordinary meeting on Friday at the White House, where the mayor-elect of New York forged a "partnership" with the fascist president who has spent the past 10 months working to establish a dictatorship. In an obscene spectacle in the Oval Office, Mamdani stood smiling amid an outpouring of praise from Trump, who came away from their meeting convinced not only that Mamdani poses no threat but that his "populist" credibility can be exploited.

Mamdani's appeasement of Trump was brushed off by apologists as a shrewd maneuver to neutralize Trump and forestall the threatened federal crackdown on the city. The real impact, however, is to disarm and confuse those looking to fight against Trump's dictatorship in New York City and around the country.

Alongside Mamdani, the Democratic Party as a whole is desperate to reach an accommodation with Trump. In the wake of the electoral rout for the Republicans, the Democratic Party rescued Trump from himself, agreeing to Trump's terms for ending the shutdown. This follows months of acquiescence to Trump's Gestapo raids and deployment of National Guard troops to cities, part of a concerted effort to overturn constitutional rule.

The Democratic Party is collaborating with Trump because, more than fascist dictatorship, it fears giving an impulse to a movement of the working class that can escape the pro-capitalist limits of the two-party system. The passage of a congressional resolution denouncing the supposed horrors of socialism ahead of Mamdani's visit with Trump, supported by the entire Democratic leadership, including Hakeem Jeffries, spoke to this fear.

Both Trump and the Democratic Party establishment are using the DSA and Mamdani, not the other way around. US capitalism is staring down a deepening crisis in which the political institutions of the past are crumbling and the economic foundations have eroded. A fresh injection of illusions, of the kind put forward by Mamdani, is invaluable to diffuse and disorient social anger, while Trump and the oligarchs he represents prepare the next round of attacks.



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