

# DSA member Janeese Lewis George wins Washington D.C. mayoral primary, pledges to work with Trump

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Washington D.C. Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), won the Democratic mayoral primary on June 16, securing approximately 52.85 percent of first-choice votes. Her main opponent, former at-large Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie, received 36.45 percent and conceded the following morning.

Lewis George will face a general election in November, but in a city where the Democratic primary is the decisive contest, she is the presumptive next mayor of Washington D.C.

The Democratic primary was the first held under Initiative 83, passed by District of Columbia voters in 2024, which introduced ranked-choice voting to local elections, allowing voters to designate second and third preferences should their favored candidates be eliminated.

Lewis George's ascendancy to the mayoralty of the nation's capital is the latest in a growing number of election victories for DSA and self-proclaimed "democratic socialist" Democrats. This now includes DSA member Zohran Mamdani in New York, the country's most populous city and center of American and world finance, and Katie Wilson in Seattle, the 18th largest US city by population. Wilson is not in the DSA but calls herself a democratic socialist.

There are two processes involved in this development. There is a profound and growing political radicalization of the working class and sections of the middle class. As the *Washington Post* noted on Sunday: "Fully 66 percent of Democrats tell Gallup they view socialism favorably, while 42 percent say the same of capitalism."

At the same time, the elevation of the pseudo-left DSA and similar elements within the Democratic Party is a defensive response to the growth of anti-capitalist sentiment. It is aimed at blocking an independent movement of the working class and channeling mass opposition from below behind electoral politics and the Democrats.

Outgoing Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser's tenure is ending in a humiliating capitulation to Trump. She traveled to Mar-a-Lago following Trump's 2024 election victory, acquiesced to the federalization of the Metropolitan Police Department, signed an executive order requiring coordination with federal law enforcement and accepted the indefinite deployment of National Guard troops in the city—all while the White House held her up as a model of Democratic "cooperation." During her campaign, Lewis George declared she would not repeat this performance.

McDuffie, her chief establishment opponent, presented himself throughout the race as a continuation of the Bowser administration, aligning himself with the Democratic establishment and appealing to the city's business community and wealthiest residents. On election night, he trailed Lewis George in seven of the District's eight wards, carrying only the affluent Ward 3. The working class population, by contrast, voted decisively for Lewis George.

Washington D.C. is a city of explosive contradictions—the seat of the most powerful capitalist state in history, yet also a city where nearly a third of children live in poverty and where black working class communities have been systematically displaced by decades of gentrification. It is ground zero for the Trump administration's mass federal layoffs, devastating tens of thousands of families dependent on public sector employment. It is from this social crisis—produced and maintained by both parties of the ruling class—that Lewis George's campaign drew its energy.

The weeks preceding the primary saw a coordinated offensive against Lewis George by sections of the ruling class—one that appears to have had the opposite of its intended effect, deepening her support among working people.

The *Washington Post* editorial board, mouthpiece of the capital's business elite, sought to discredit her through her association with Ward 8 Councilmember Trayon White, who has faced federal bribery charges and a history of antisemitic

statements. Four days before the election, the D.C. Office of Campaign Finance levied a \$16,000 fine against Lewis George's campaign, ruling it had improperly coordinated with labor unions and an independent expenditure committee. The timing of this ruling had the unmistakable character of a political operation designed to damage her candidacy.

Most significantly, Trump intervened directly on June 11, threatening federal retaliation against the entire city should voters elect Lewis George. The threat backfired, driving voters toward the very candidate it sought to defeat.

Despite the popular enthusiasm her campaign generated, Lewis George politically represents something quite different from the "socialist" label she has cultivated.

Elected to the Ward 4 Council seat in November 2020 on the wave of radicalization that followed the police murder of George Floyd, Lewis George initially proclaimed herself in favor of defunding the Metropolitan Police Department. By the time she launched her mayoral campaign, that position had been quietly abandoned. As with every DSA politician who has ascended to higher office, the radicalism is shed in direct proportion to the proximity of power.

This was made clear by the *Post* following her victory. Commenting on her electoral success, the editorial board noted that Lewis George "moderated to win the Democratic primary and would be constrained as mayor." The newspaper—owned by Amazon founder and billionaire oligarch Jeff Bezos—explained: "[T]he biggest constraint on Lewis George's ambitious agenda is the requirement to balance the budget. D.C.'s government is trying to close a \$1.1 billion deficit for the coming fiscal year, and the problem will only get worse with time."

Lewis George's proposed tax increases on the wealthy and corporations—the supposed funding mechanism for her promises on childcare, housing and affordability—rest on foundations the editorial board describes as precarious. Meanwhile, the Trump administration can be expected to withhold rather than facilitate any federal funding her programs presume.

Lewis George has pitched her program as a bold agenda for affordability and social investment, but one operating entirely and explicitly within the framework of market capitalism. In an interview with *Notus*, she declared, "My message to the business community is I want to work with them and they should be open to a change that actually could grow our businesses here." Indulging in standard pro-business liberal rhetoric, she added, "I have laid out a vision for D.C. of how we're going to leverage our strengths and innovative ways in which we can support our smaller businesses and our bigger businesses."

The language—emphasizing that she will be "mayor of

everybody... one D.C. united"—is a direct echo of her fellow DSA member and New York City Mayor Mamdani. Since taking office, Mamdani has systematically shed his campaign reform promises. He has met privately with JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon and Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon, declared himself mayor of "the entire city," and moved to reassure Wall Street that his anti-billionaire rhetoric was never a serious governing program.

Continuing her similarities with Mamdani, Lewis George responded to Trump's threats against the city should it elect her with rhetorical appeals to democracy and calls for residents simply to vote. When Trump declared that "maybe we take back Washington, run it on the federal basis," Lewis George replied, "We are not going to get ICE off our streets or protect Home Rule by fearing this president."

The claim that the Democratic Party can be "reformed" by replacing establishment leaders with figures such as Bernie Sanders, Mamdani and Lewis George is a fraud. Mamdani signaled his loyalty to American capitalism and imperialism by meeting twice with the fascist Donald Trump in the White House, most recently just three days before Trump launched the criminal war in Iran.

For her part, Lewis George followed her primary win by announcing, "I want to make sure the president understands that I am willing to work with anyone to the benefit of D.C. residents, and that includes President Trump and members of his administration." She added: "If the White House asks for a conversation or call, I am open to having that conversation or call."

The *World Socialist Web Site* noted of Mamdani that he sought "accommodation with a fascist administration rather than mobilizing the working class in New York and nationally against it." It explained that the DSA's overtures to the fascist president reflected "a feeling within these layers that Trump is not so bad after all." The article continued: "Dictatorship, fascism, genocide, mass deportation might just be OK if there is a little space for the upper-middle class pseudo-left."



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