

Mamdani-backed candidates win NYC congressional primaries: The political issues

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On Tuesday, all three candidates for the US House of Representatives from New York City endorsed by Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Mayor Zohran Mamdani won their Democratic Party primary races. They defeated establishment Democrats backed by House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, from New York's 8th congressional district (CD), and New York Governor Kathy Hochul.

Two of the three winners are DSA members who call themselves socialists. Democratic incumbents were defeated in two of the three CDs. Since the districts involved are heavily Democratic, the victory of the primary winners in the November general election is virtually assured.

The primary results reflect a political radicalization within the working class and among youth and professional layers who are being hammered by the accelerating economic, social and political crisis of American capitalism. The leftward shift of large sections of the population that resulted in the election of Mamdani last year is continuing and deepening. It is fueled by hatred for Trump and disgust with the Democratic Party's failure to seriously oppose—indeed, its complicity in—Trump's fascistic attacks on immigrants and democratic rights, wars of aggression, cuts in social programs, and the plundering of the economy for the benefit of his fellow billionaire oligarchs.

This radicalization in the center of capitalist finance—the city with the largest number of billionaires in the world—has national and international significance. It is accompanied by an upsurge in the struggles of the working class and a growing rebellion against the corporatist trade union bureaucracy. It poses the task of breaking with the Democratic Party, a party of American imperialism and the corporate oligarchy within which the DSA operates as a faction.

In the 10th CD, which includes lower Manhattan and parts of Brooklyn, former New York City comptroller Brad Lander routed the two-term incumbent Dan Goldman, taking 65.8 percent of the vote compared to Goldman's 34 percent. A one-time DSA member, Lander, who is Jewish, called for

the abolition of the anti-immigrant Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency and denounced the Israeli war in Gaza as a genocide, demanding a cutoff of US military aid to Israel. He attacked Goldman for taking money from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

In the 7th CD, which includes parts of Brooklyn and Queens, DSA member Claire Valdez, a member of the New York State Assembly, handily defeated Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso. The latter was backed by retiring Representative Nydia M. Velazquez, as well as Jeffries and Hochul. Valdez called for social reforms such as Medicare for all, accused Israel of genocide in Gaza, and described herself as a union organizer.

In the 13th CD, which covers upper Manhattan and the Bronx, Darializa Avila Chevalier, a DSA member who was active in anti-genocide protests at Columbia University narrowly defeated five-term incumbent Adriano Espaillat, a senior Democratic whip and chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. She called for limiting ICE and denounced Espaillat for taking campaign funds from AIPAC.

The DSA-endorsed victories extended to statewide races. DSA or DSA-backed candidates won multiple State Senate races, including the defeat of incumbent State Senator Jessica Ramos. DSA-backed candidates also won multiple State Assembly primaries.

These victories follow last week's win by DSA member Janeese Lewis George in the Washington D.C. Democratic mayoral primary, virtually assuring her victory in the November general election. DSA members will then hold the mayor's office in the nation's capital as well as its most populous city.

It is highly significant that a central theme of the DSA campaigns was opposition to the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, which garnered broad support in a city with 1.2 million Jews. This shatters the claim that opposition to Zionism and genocide equals antisemitism.

Republican politicians and media outlets responded with near hysteria to the primary results in New York. Trump

repeatedly called the DSA candidates “communists.” Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson posted on X: “We are in a fight RIGHT NOW to save the Republic, and EVERY AMERICAN needs to take this seriously.”

At a press conference on Wednesday, Johnson warned that communism is now “on our own shores” and added, “The Marxists have nominated some of the most radical candidates to ever run for office, and they’re running for Congress. The insurgent left is on the rise.”

Trump’s fascist aide Stephen Miller declared that the Democratic Party is embracing a “violent ideology that wants to tear America down and destroy everything that we know and love, from top to bottom.”

The Murdoch-owned *New York Post* headlined its front-page report “The Hateful Slate.”

In fact, the DSA is being brought forward and further integrated into both the Democratic Party and the trade union bureaucracy to promote the fatal illusion that the Democrats can be pressured into serving the interests of working people, and the union apparatus can be forced to oppose the corporations and the government.

The DSA’s role is to block an independent movement of the working class against capitalism. It works to channel the growing social and political opposition into the blind alley of electoral politics and the Democratic Party. It has nothing to do with Marxism or genuine socialism. It represents the interests not of the working class, but of privileged and better-off layers of the middle class, which seek to improve their lot within the framework of the existing system—and at the expense of the workers.

Those sections of the Democratic Party that oppose the DSA do so because they fear that any appeal to the grievances of the masses can fuel an explosive movement from below that will escape the control of the capitalist parties and the oligarchy they both serve. All sections of the Democratic Party, including the DSA, have focused their efforts on containing, diverting and dissipating the explosive social anger that was manifested in the mass “No Kings” demonstrations. These sentiments erupted as well in the huge protests in Minnesota after the murders of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti by federal agents, which raised the call for a general strike.

The DSA and Mamdani, even as they come into conflict with the right-wing party establishment, are working closely with it. Hence the refusal of Mamdani and the DSA to run candidates against either Jeffries or Hochul, both of whom won their primaries uncontested. In a deal worked out with Mamdani and the New York DSA, DSA Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez did not endorse any anti-incumbent congressional candidates in the Democratic primaries so as not to damage relations with Jeffries,

limiting herself to state legislative races.

In his first six months in office, Mamdani has already dropped his modest reform promises. He has allied with Hochul and the New York Police Department, supporting an increase in the number of cops. He has set up a Commission on Government Efficiency to slash city departments as part of an austerity program to reduce the city’s projected budget deficit of \$12.6 billion over the next two years.

The growth of the class struggle in New York has exposed the real class axis of the Mamdani administration and the DSA. During the nurses’ strike earlier this year, Mamdani supported Hochul even as she declared an emergency to sanction scabs crossing the picket lines. During the Long Island Rail Road strike, he promoted a scab bus operation to weaken the strike’s impact.

To signal his loyalty to the capitalist status quo, Mamdani paid two visits to the fascist in the White House, the last only two days before the criminal assault on Iran. Asked by reporters if the DSA primary wins could hurt the Democrats in the November elections, Jeffries praised Mamdani’s White House visits, saying, “No, Donald Trump has a working relationship with the mayor of the city of New York, and he’s made that publicly and explicitly clear to America not once but twice in the Oval Office.”

The international working class has had critical experiences with movements similar to the DSA that promise radical reforms within the framework of capitalism, only to betray the workers and impose the dictates of the ruling class—from Syriza in Greece, to Podemos in Spain, to Jeremy Corbyn in Britain and the Left Party in Germany. These lessons must be assimilated and applied to the current struggles. The danger is that without an independent movement of the working class against all sections and parties of the ruling class, the initiative will pass to the far right and the fascists.

The task before workers and youth is not the reform of the system, but its overthrow. The capitalist oligarchy must be expropriated in the US as part of an international struggle for socialism. The necessary revolutionary leadership—the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International—must be built to lead that struggle.



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