

After NYC elections, Jacobin offers services of DSA to Democratic establishment, union bureaucracy

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In their New York City primary campaigns for the US House of Representatives, the candidates backed by Mayor Zohran Mamdani and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) claimed to be leading a rebellion against the Democratic Party establishment. The victories last month of all three—Brad Lander, Claire Valdez and Darializa Avila Chevalier—reflected a shift to the left and growing anti-capitalist sentiment among broad sections of the working class and youth.

However, the articles published by *Jacobin* magazine, the DSA's unofficial organ, in the aftermath of the June 23 primaries are addressed not to the radicalizing workers and youth, but to the Democratic Party and trade union apparatuses facing a rebellion from below. *Jacobin* cites the DSA election victories to argue, in the form of friendly advice, that the right-wing establishment should not be distracted by the supposed “socialism” of the DSA. For its own good, it must instead embrace the DSA and accept the organization's offer to lend it a “left” cover.

These articles reveal the true function of the DSA, which is not a socialist party but rather an essential prop of the capitalist political system. It works to channel the mounting opposition in the working class to inequality, war, attacks on social rights, and Trump's dictatorship-in-the-making behind the Democratic Party, a party of the corporate oligarchy and the military-intelligence establishment, and an accomplice in these attacks.

In his June 24 article, “The Socialist Future Is Being Written in New York,” Branko Marcetic speaks directly to the Democrats. He notes that nine of the 10 DSA-backed candidates in New York won their primaries, and remarks, “Beyond the candidates, both DSA and socialism itself appear to have gone mainstream with last night's result.”

Further on, he writes:

With the Democratic brand in the gutter thanks to what is widely viewed as the party establishment's feckless and inept opposition to Donald Trump, the door has been blown wide open for the left-wing insurgents who have previously had to fend off, and even fell to, charges of party disloyalty or not being “real” Democrats.

In other words, the DSA is a power to be reckoned with. The discredited and widely hated party establishment must utilize these

“real Democrats” to give the oldest active capitalist party in the world an “anti-establishment” veneer.

To drive home his point, Marcetic brandishes a carrot and a stick before the Democrats:

As a result, establishment lawmakers in Albany now face a clear choice. They can back Mamdani's agenda, and vote it over the line, and reap the rich reserves of electoral rewards that are there for those voters view as his allies. Or they can block it and face a primary where they will have to endure both voter resentment and the organizing power of DSA.

This is a warning that the Democrats must allow the DSA to give them a makeover or be trounced at the polls.

In another article likewise published one day after the June 23 primaries, titled “In NYC Elections, Unions Bet Against the Future Again,” Eric Blanc is even more blunt. He writes:

In New York City, leaders of unions and nonprofit groups like the Working Families Party again picked the losing, old-guard side in last night's elections. How long before these leaders get on board with the future of working class politics?

Writing as an unabashed and concerned supporter of the labor bureaucracy, Blanc continues:

Delivering Avila Chevalier the biggest Congressional upset since Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's win in 2018, a majority of District 13 primary voters showed that they no longer trust a Democratic establishment unable or unwilling to seriously challenge Donald Trump and an oligarchic status quo. Yet most union leaders haven't yet followed their lead. And it's a sign of serious internal decay that these organizations, so powerful on paper, can now deliver so little in the way of actual votes. Far too often, union members have become disconnected from our organizations.

We saw this same movie play out in early 2025, when most of the city's union leadership lined up behind Andrew

Cuomo—a serial harasser they’d demanded resign four years earlier—and watched Mamdani beat him anyway. (And in another, no less troubling form, we’ve seen how many unions across the country have struggled to convince their members to vote against Trump.)

What must be done to counter the growing alienation of rank-and-file workers from the pro-corporate union apparatus? Blanc advises “savvy union operators”:

Union leaders need to come to terms with the fact that backing old-guard politicians like Espallat or Cuomo is no longer a risk-averse, pragmatic wager. Even on purely self-interested grounds, savvy union operators should start reading the room. With a possible Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez presidential run looming, the stakes are high.

He cites as a positive role model UAW President Shawn Fain:

As UAW President Shawn Fain put it at Valdez’s January 9 campaign launch event: “This is exactly how the labor movement can fight back against corporate greed and inequality: by electing more of our own.”

These words were likely composed by DSA and *Labor Notes* members who occupy prominent and highly paid positions on Fain’s staff at the union’s Solidarity House headquarters.

Blanc insists that questions of program and political principle not stand in the way of collaboration with trade union bureaucrats and Democratic Party hacks. He writes:

Since it’ll take all of us to overcome our corporate enemies and their political enablers, we can’t let our strategic differences prevent us from uniting tactically on campaigns we can agree on, whether in electoral politics or on policy fights.

To underscore the need for unbridled opportunism, he quotes from an article he wrote a year ago following Mamdani’s victory in the Democratic mayoral primary: “Zohran smartly rejected a widespread leftist tendency to treat liberals only as ideological competitors to be fought ... we can’t ally with liberals only when we’re in the lead.”

Concluding with what amounts to a warning to the powers-that-be, he writes:

That being said, there are strong moral and political reasons why unions, progressive nonprofits, and the WFP (Working Families Party) should try to be bolder electorally and more collaborative when it comes to DSA... Working people are angry, and the old establishment is discredited.

Jacobin provides further critical advice to the union apparatus in Roman Broszkowski’s July 8 interview (“UAW Region 9A’s Big Risks in NYC’s Elections Paid Off”) with Brandon Mancilla, a DSA member and director of United Auto Workers (UAW) Region 9A. Broszkowski notes that the New York State AFL–CIO endorsed seven incumbents in the primaries, only three of whom won. UAW Region 9A, however, endorsed five DSA-backed candidates, and four of them won. Broszkowski and Mancilla argue that the union apparatus and the Democrats must get behind the DSA for their own good.

“The increased presence of UAW organizers on campuses has also placed the union within conversations about academic freedom and free speech protections, especially following the sustained crackdowns against pro-Palestine protesters,” Broszkowski remarks carefully.

He tactfully neglects to mention that in March of this year Mancilla ordered student workers at Columbia University in New York to drop their political demands—including divestment from weapons manufacturers that are complicit in the genocide in Gaza, protections for non-citizen workers against ICE, an end to campus surveillance and police collaboration and the right to protest without fear of arrest or deportation—and refused to approve a strike that workers had twice authorized in lopsided votes.

As the criminal US war against Iran, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement murders of workers, Trump’s frame-ups of anti-ICE and anti-Gaza genocide protesters, and the economic crisis continue, workers and young people are becoming increasingly disgusted with both parties and looking for an anticapitalist alternative. The DSA is benefiting electorally from this initial radicalization, while serving the ruling class as a trap for the leftward-moving masses.

Putting an end to war, dictatorship and inequality requires a break from both capitalist parties and their pseudo-left appendages such as the DSA. A mass, independent movement of the working class based on socialist policies must be built, and this requires the establishment of democratic organizations of the workers—rank-and-file committees at work sites and in neighborhoods—to overthrow the corporatist trade union bureaucracy, transfer power to the rank-and-file, and coordinate the industrial and political fight against the capitalist system. This genuine fight for socialism is being waged by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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