

U.S. faces political, social, and economic crisis

Submitted for Preconvention discussion by the Socialist Resurgence Steering Committee

The U.S. political, social, and economic situation is inseparable from the world capitalist crisis described in the international section of this report. The world capitalist economy remains sluggish. The “recovery” from the 2008 financial crisis, known as the great recession, was a recovery for the bosses only and balanced on the backs of workers and the oppressed. All of this recovery is precarious -- worsened by Trump’s trade war with China which has resulted in U.S. exports to China falling by 31.4%. Chinese exports to the U.S. are down 7.8%.

Under Trump, the U.S. jobless rate has fallen to the lowest in nearly 50 years. In July, the economy had added jobs for 105 consecutive months, including the first 29 months of the Trump administration. Trump’s tariffs have hurt small farmers but have also resulted in the return of some manufacturing to the U.S. There has been a proliferation of small shops, often nonunion, and a shift of some production to the U.S. South. Despite the claims that the U.S. has ben “de-industrialized”, manufacturing still produces a significant portion of annual GDP and the U.S. ranks second only to China in manufacturing output. The U.S. manufacturing sector employed 12.35 million people in December 2016 and 12.56 million in December 2017, an increase of 207,000.

The labor force participation rate, the percentage of the entire civilian population aged 16 and older that is employed or actively looking for work in the last four weeks, remains near the same rate it was during the Obama administration. This measure of employment fell 2.8 percentage points during the Obama years and is essentially [unchanged](#) under Trump. Labor force participation fell dramatically during the great recession as many “boomer” generation workers left the workforce permanently. The low unemployment rate isn’t the whole story — millions continue to work part time jobs who would rather work full time and wages remain stagnant.

Stock prices and after-tax corporate profits have set records. So have single-family home prices. The Trump tax cuts were alleged to give businesses more money to invest in expanding operations and job creation, but the majority of the money was used for stock buybacks, stimulating the stock market. The number of people without health insurance rose by 2 million to 7 million, depending on the survey.

A new recession is looming

Despite Trump's claims to the contrary, a recession is on the horizon. The manufacturing sector has slowed in the U.S., Japan, and the Eurozone. U.S. housing sales are slow, and wages remain stagnant. The fastest growing job categories are in low-wage sectors. In early September, the Federal Reserve headed off a banking crisis by pumping at least \$275 billion in temporary cash into the repurchase agreements market or "repo" market when lenders could not meet demand for short-term money.

CNN explains the repo market like this: "In the repo market, financial institutions such as hedge funds and investment banks borrow cheap money from large investors such as mutual banks to fund their operations. The borrower (hedge fund) or the dealer sells securities such as U.S. Treasury bills as a form of collateral for the short-term loan.

The counterparty or the buyer (mutual banks) takes the collateral and earns a small interest once the borrower repurchases the security."

Why does this matter? The U.S. repo market melted down in September 2008, a crucial part of that year's financial panic. This and the Fed decision to cut interest rates twice points to efforts to fight off a recession. A recession can only deepen and exacerbate the effects of an economy that already has shown itself incapable of meeting the needs of the vast majority.

Education

Primary, secondary, and higher education have been reorganized, privatized and casualized over the years. Teachers and university instructors have seen cuts in pay and benefits. Teaching as a profession has become more precarious at the university level as more teaching is done by adjuncts who don't have permanent employment. Adjuncts often don't know if they have a job the following term at the end of the year. Tenure track jobs are becoming rarer as universities further tighten their belts.

University students have seen increasing costs and tuition resulting in an explosion of student debt over the past decades. Frustration with student debt is one factor in the youth radicalization. Youth are told that they need a higher education to survive in capitalist America, but soon find out that their education won't get them a job that pays well enough to pay off the massive debt incurred. Student debt impairs the ability of workers to purchase homes or save for retirement.

The free speech rights of students and professors has come under attack. Critics of Israeli apartheid and advocates for BDS have been attacked as anti-Semitic by pro-Israel politicians and lobbying groups.

Climate activism at the high school and college level continues to deepen. The disruption of a recent Harvard-Yale football game by more than 100 students and alumni, demanding that the schools divest from fossil fuels, was a dramatic and inspiring action. Tens of thousands of High School students in cities across the U.S. participated in Student Climate Strikes in March and September 2019.

Black-led student protests at Syracuse University have highlighted racist incidents on campus. The #NotAgainSU sit-in protest made a [series of demands](#) on the university including the punishment of students involved in hate incidents, diversity training, more counselors, and curriculum reforms.

In large urban districts, public school students and teachers are confronted by cuts and schools that are falling apart. Horror stories about leaking roofs, mold, and asbestos are common. A Philadelphia teacher was recently diagnosed with mesothelioma, a disease more commonly associated with shipyard and industrial workers. Students experience a lack of school counselors, outdated textbooks, large class sizes, and heavy-handed campus cops. Many children from oppressed nationalities experience school as a pipeline to the criminal justice system. Students, parents and teachers should be natural allies in a fight to revitalize public education in our cities.

Student activism around climate, racial justice, women's issues, and high tuition and debt shows the potential for a radicalized student activist movement. Our press and youth work should take these and other struggles up to the best of our abilities.

Healthcare

There is a huge public healthcare crisis in the United States. Lack of affordable and adequate coverage remains a persistent problem. 27.7 million Americans are still without any health care coverage, despite the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare. Initially the rate of uninsured nonelderly Americans went down from 46.5 million with the enactment of the ACA in 2010 to just below 27 million in 2016. However, for the first time in 2017 to 2018, the number of uninsured increased by half a million to 27.7 million.** The rising cost of health insurance premiums, high copays and deductibles are all reasons cited for workers unable to afford health insurance. Many of these insurance plans have inadequate coverage, and do not include dental care. Low wage workers, particularly non-documented workers, are hit especially hard because of their

socioeconomic status. People of color are at higher risk of being uninsured than non-Hispanic Whites. **Kaiser Family Foundation, Dec, 13,2019

As unemployment and underemployment grows; as wages and hours of workers are cut, many find they can no longer afford basic medications. The price of insulin has skyrocketed--the average price of insulin has increased by 64% since January 2014.* Some patients have to make choices between medication and eating or heating their homes, or even rationing doses of insulin, a potentially life threatening practice.

*Medical Economics, April 3, 2019

The US healthcare crisis isn't limited to patient care. Healthcare workers are under siege by employers. Hospitals and clinics are cutting wages and benefits while nurses and doctors are forced to see more patients, despite evidence that doing so increases errors with disastrous effects. Experienced nurses and doctors are being fired and replaced by fresh out of school nurses and doctors-they're paid less. Experienced staff not fired are leaving the profession due to ever increasing on the job stress. Suicide rates of nurses and doctors are on the rise.

The Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, is a failure. Pitched by Democrats as an alternative to universal care or a single payer system, The ACA is not affordable for working and poor families. Insurance rates and co-pays are too costly. The largest cause of bankruptcy in America is medical costs.

Social Democrats and many progressives advocate Medicare for All. This will fall short in addressing the healthcare crisis. Medicare is an 80/20 model (patients are still responsible for 20% of the cost) and is too expensive for workers and the poor.

An example from Cuba

In Cuba, the healthcare system is publicly owned with several layers. There are community clinics, with doctor-nurse teams who live in the neighborhoods that they serve, local hospitals, and larger medical institutes. All healthcare is free, with some exceptions for some medicines and procedures for higher income people, and quality of life indices are impressive. Cuba enjoys one of the highest life expectancy rates in the hemisphere, with the average life expectancy at 78.05 years old, compared to the U.S. at 78.62 years. In 2005, Cuba had 627 doctors and 94 dentists per 100,000 population. That same year, there were 225 physicians and 54 dentists per 100,000 population in the U.S. All medical and nursing education in Cuba is free. Cuba has innovated in the realm of vaccines and cancer treatment. Unlike the U.S., which sends weapons around

the world, Cuba sends doctors and nurses to disaster areas and semi-colonial countries.

Fight for a National Healthcare System

Doctors, Nurses and organized labor should be natural allies in the fight for a national healthcare system. Additionally, nurses, physician's assistants, and doctors should have the right to unionize. We need more doctors and nurses with lower patient loads. As with all education, medical and nursing school should be free. All debt for education must be abolished.

The healthcare and pharmaceutical industries must be nationalized under workers control. Out of control medicine costs must be immediately brought under control. Society should provide more community-based clinics, visiting nurses and doctors, and preventative care. Nationalizing urgent care facilities would be a step in the direction of community health clinics.

Humane and affordable community-based elder care must become a standard. Currently, elderly people with resources and money can afford expensive assisted living facilities and nursing homes, while working class families struggle to care for older relatives. We need elder care that allows people to live at home in their communities and with the proper support from medical professionals.

For a class struggle strategy to win health care for all

Winning free, affordable healthcare for all will require an independent class struggle approach. Our movements cannot depend on lobbying the Democrats to win. We must mobilize in our unions and communities to fight for healthcare for all.

Health care is a human right. This must include dental, vision care, and humane, non-punitive, and non-stigmatizing approaches to mental health care. No one should have to go bankrupt because of medical costs or decide whether one eats or gets medicine. Get the insurance companies out of the equation. Free quality universal public health care now!

The state of the class

Living standards for U.S. workers are falling. For many, housing is priced beyond reach. For the privilege of sleeping under a roof, a minimum wage worker would have to work 2.5 full time jobs to afford even a modest apartment. A \$25/hr minimum wage is the bare minimum for low wage workers to survive. Older workers are increasingly

experiencing homelessness as wages stagnate, job opportunities become scarcer, and retirement plans have been slashed. Only 18 percent of private-sector workers have a defined-benefit pension plan — down from 35 percent in the early 1990s. Savings plans, such as 401K's are an inadequate substitute for pensions. The average household has less than two years' worth of income saved in these types of accounts. Public employees and union members are more likely to have a pension plan, but even these sectors are faced with attacks on retirement benefits.

Average life expectancy in the U.S. has gone down for 3 consecutive years, the result of the opioid crisis, a sharply increased suicide rate, and an increase in liver disease. The death rate for men 25-35 from liver disease, including cirrhosis, increased by 8 percent over the past 10 years. Of course, life expectancy for oppressed nationalities is lower than for whites.

The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with 2.2 million in prisons and jails as of 2017. This represents a 500% increase over a 40-year period. Most of this increase is due to racist “tough on crime” policies, mandatory sentencing guidelines, and the so-called war on drugs. Both ruling class parties bear responsibility for this injustice. People of color make up 37% of the U.S. population but 67% of the prison population. Black men are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white men and Latino males are twice as likely to be incarcerated than white males. Black women (3 times) and Latinas (1.3 times) are also incarcerated at disproportionate rates compared to white women. Racial prejudice plays a significant and disproportionate role in the application of the death penalty in the U.S. Formerly incarcerated people face discrimination in housing and employment exacerbating recidivism rates.

Prison privatization has increased significantly. The United States has the world's largest private prison population. Of the 1.5 million people in state and federal prisons in 2016, 8.5 percent, or 128,063, were incarcerated in private prisons. From 2000 to 2016 the number of people housed in private prisons increased five times faster than the total prison population. Over a similar timeframe, the proportion of people detained in private immigration facilities increased by 442 percent. Industries linked to prisons produce services and consumer goods often paying less than \$1/hour for labor.

The homeless crisis in the United States has grown worse as gentrification and rising housing prices drive working people out of neighborhoods. More than a half million people are homeless on any given day in the U.S. In California, the number of homeless on a day-to-day basis is around 130,000. Trump has recently touted “solutions” to homelessness that stigmatize and criminalize the homeless. The solution to homelessness is not through punishing the homeless. The homelessness crisis is a

symptom of the capitalist system's inability to meet the needs of working people. We should demand an emergency public works program to build public housing, with all workers paid top union wages.

The solution to the homeless crisis will require a national health service, free education through college, and the cancellation of college debt among other measures. Millions in the U.S. struggle to make ends meet. Millions in the U.S. are one paycheck away from homelessness. One thing we should project in the coming period is a regular labor column in our press.

Income/wealth inequality

Wealth inequality in the U.S. has increased, with 95% of economic gains going to the top 1%, since 2009, when the “recovery” from the great recession began. Income inequality has reached the highest point in more than 50 years. The bottom 50% of families, representing 62 million U.S. households, average \$11,000 net worth.

The wealthiest 1% possess 40% of the nation's wealth while the bottom 80% own 7%. Eight people, six from the U.S., own as much wealth as half of humanity. Only the top 20% fully recovered from the Great Recession.

Corporate executives are showered with millions of dollars in bonuses and stock options while the majority struggle paycheck to paycheck. Mary Barra, GM CEO, rakes in \$22 million annually. Even failed executives get paid. For example, Sears execs received \$25 million after bankrupting the company; the PG&E CEO who was in charge when the 2018 wildfires broke out left with \$2.5 million; and Wells Fargo gave Carrie Tolstedt \$125 million after her division was caught opening 2 million unauthorized accounts. Meanwhile workers get laid off, lose pensions, and face a less certain future.

This inequality in wealth is also reflected in an inequality of power in politics and in terms of the criminal justice system. The rich can gain access to politicians through social interactions and political contributions. Poor people do not have the same level of access to political leaders and when caught up in the criminal justice system are unable to afford an attorney capable of mounting a real defense.

Trump NLRB

According to the [Economic Policy Institute](#),

“Under the Trump administration, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has systematically rolled back workers’ rights to form unions and engage in collective

bargaining with their employers, to the detriment of workers, their communities, and the economy. The Trump board has issued a series of significant decisions weakening worker protections under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA/Act). Further, the board has engaged in an unprecedented number of rulemakings aimed at overturning existing worker protections.”

Trump’s choice for labor Secretary, Eugene Scalia, has a long record of union busting and the administration has used executive orders to undermine Federal and other public sector unions.

A record number of strikes

The number of striking workers rose to nearly 500,000 in 2018, up from about 25,000 in 2017, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics -- the largest number since 1980.

An increased combativity among workers is manifested in an uptick in strike activity and organizing. The teachers’ strikes in various states caused increased excitement and awareness of unions. Many of the teacher strikes were in so-called Red states where the ability of the Democratic Party to co-opt the movements was lessened by the weakness of the Democrats as an institution.

The red state teacher strikes, which came after decades of cuts in public education, were not just a reaction to lagging pay and benefits. These strikes were led and energized by women.

[Tithi Bhattacharya wrote](#): “This movement has to be recognized as a feminist project, and all feminists need to stand with the teachers. Here’s why: 1. [77% of all public school teachers](#) in the US are women. In some states the percentage is over 80% 2. The prevalence of women in this sector is undergirded by a more complex issue. Teaching is seen as “women’s work”.

She continues: “These strikes are for wages and benefits, but they arise from a social landscape scoured by gender and racial inequalities. The leaders of the strikes are thus not simply workers shaped only by conditions of work: gender marks them.

“These are women fighting for [dignity and security](#) in the most commodious sense of those terms. Their gender is not incidental to this strike, their narratives of fear about their families and health, are not backstories to what is merely a wage struggle.”

Writing in [Socialist Action](#), Ann Montague noted:

But in 2018 a massive and militant strike of women workers went to the state capitals not to lobby disinterested politicians but to make demands and dare them to jail the strikers. They then refused to return to work until they were ready and saw the deal in writing. Of course, ever increasing cuts to education funding are still taking place, but the cutbacks were held in check through last year's strike action.

“For the last few decades, the working class has been under assault. And for women this has been accompanied by extreme cuts to social services and pressure for women to “volunteer” to fill the gaps by working for free.

“Teachers likewise are often compelled to fill the gaps in social services funding—for free. Additional work outside the classroom now includes programs to assist students who are homeless, addressing food insecurity, and dealing with cuts in positions for school nurses. In many schools they now serve both breakfast and lunch, and for homeless students they also pack additional food for the weekend.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “In 2018, there were 20 major work stoppages involving 485,000 workers...The number of major work stoppages beginning in 2018 was the highest since 2007 (21 major work stoppages). The number of workers involved was the highest since 1986 ...Educational services and health care and social assistance industry groups accounted for over 90 percent” of idled workers.

2019 strikes

In April, an 11-day strike by about 31,000 Stop and Shop workers ended in what the union called a victory. Workers got pay increases, saved time and a half on Sunday, and preserved pensions. The strike drew support for union members and community members.

In July, Coal miners in Kentucky protested their former employer, Blackjewel LLC, by blocking a railroad track that carries coal trains, demanding back pay after being laid off. Blackjewel had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on July 1. Many of these nonunion workers had voted for then candidate Trump because of his promise to revitalize the coal industry. These workers' decision to take collective action, and the support given

by the surrounding community, shows the potential for the mobilization and self-organization of workers.

In September of 2019, 50,000 auto workers at GM downed tools and walked off the job. During the recession, the UAW and its members had agreed to deep concessions to keep GM from going under. Now, GM is prospering, and CEO Mary Barra is one of the highest paid executives in the U.S. with a total compensation package of almost \$22 million annually - 281 times the median salary of a GM employee.

The solidarity between more established workers and newer hires against two-tier is a sign of a shift in class consciousness. The GM strike has reportedly caused workers and Ford and Fiat-Chrysler to advocate for a walkout in solidarity with GM workers. The GM settlement represented at best a partial victory with some gains, but the path to permanent full-time employment for temps remains filled with obstacles.

The two-tier nature of the workforce is still in place, creating potential divisions in the union. Temps, about 7 percent of the workforce, are not given a clear path to permanent or “seniority” status. Temps may work three years to gain seniority status, but any layoff of 30 days or more interrupts that accrual of time and they have to start from zero upon returning to work.

While seniority status workers get an \$11,000 bonus for signing the contract, temps only get \$4500. Workers still have an eight-year “progression” from the lowest pay rate to the highest rate of \$32.32/hr. Newly hired temps will get no pay raises. Temps still get no pension, 401K, retiree health care, or profit sharing. There are no pension increases for retirees and no COLA for workers. The contract was ratified by a vote of 23,389 to 17,501—hardly an overwhelming endorsement by the ranks.

The Chicago Teachers’ Strike lasted 11 days, making it the longest teacher strike for decades in the 3rd largest school district in the country. Again, the CTU strike had a mixed result. Some important gains were the agreement by the district to reduce class sizes and find more money for social workers, nurses, and librarians.

The CTU also raised broad demands for reforms that would benefit students and their families. These include more affordable housing and social services. Similarly, in Los Angeles (January 2019) striking LA teachers were able to negotiate smaller class sizes and the district agreed to hire more nurses, guidance counselors, librarians, and support staff.

The main union federation, the AFI-CIO, faces a lot of rank and file pressure to fight the bosses. Trumka, a former Miners' union head, raised a lot of expectations when he first took over as head of the Federation. These hopes were soon dashed when Trumka failed to lead an effective fightback against the bosses.

Sara Nelson, a militant-sounding head of the Flight Attendants' union made headlines by threatening to strike during the last government shutdown. It was this threat and the massive sick-out by air traffic controllers that forced an end to the shutdown. Many believe that Nelson will run to succeed Trumka as head of the AFL-CIO. There is also talk of Liz Shuler, secretary treasurer of the Federation, being Trumka's potential successor. Shuler led the federation's campaign to turn back right-to-work in Missouri.

Overall, the balance sheet on the 2019 strikes is one of partial victories, increased class solidarity, and increasing positive attitudes towards organized labor. Our interventions around labor should reflect an overall optimistic attitude. After years of retreat, the unions are beginning to grow again and represent more than 16 million workers providing the material basis for a working-class fightback.

Workers under 35 represent the main component of this new growth of unions. The Nation wrote: "Millennials are responsible for a huge portion of the recent gains in union representation across the workforce, which has managed to remain fairly steady (yep, young people are keeping labor alive). Growing by some 198,000 workers, youth in union jobs are offsetting loss of union jobs in older age brackets..." The Nation continues that this growth includes "historically unorganized service industries like retail or health-care-support services—two areas where robust unionization efforts have been led by women, immigrants, and people of color." Our own experience in hotel work points to the central importance of immigrant workers, particularly women.

Where we can, our comrades should try to join unions. Our student comrades can play an essential role in strike support and worker solidarity projects.

In 2020, we can expect the labor bureaucracy to throw support behind the Democrats, but there remains a lot of distrust and skepticism about the Democrats among the rank and file. This situation offers a real opportunity to educate about the need for a working-class party and, perhaps, to take some initial steps towards a campaign for a Labor Party.

A snapshot of the state of Black America

Voting rights and other gains of the Civil Rights Movement have been under attack for years. Following the election of Barack Obama, voter suppression laws began to appear in state legislatures -- strict photo I.D. requirements, cutting early voting, and increased restrictions on registration.

In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that a key provision of the Voting Rights Act, which required federal approval for states with a history of discrimination before making changes to voting laws, was no longer needed.

While the census bureau reports that the poverty has finally returned to pre-recession level, poverty persists, and the racial aspect of poverty is evident. Median income for Black families lags behind white households with median income for African American households in 2018 at \$41,361, compared with \$70,642 for white households. The poverty rate for Black people was almost 21 percent compared to about 8 percent for non-Hispanic whites. White households own 86 times more wealth than Black households and 68 times more wealth than Latino households. Median net worth of black households was \$9,590 compared to more than \$130,000 for white households. This speaks to the accumulated weight of institutionalized racial discrimination, lack of educational opportunities, austerity, and continued disparities in the criminal justice system. All of this makes the call for reparations for slavery more relevant than ever.

A look at the state of Philadelphia's Black community might provide a snapshot of the overall state of the Black oppressed nationality in the U.S. Black people are almost 45% of the population of the fifth largest city in the U.S. An additional 12 percent of the city are Latino/a. In two of Philadelphia's majority-Black neighborhoods, life expectancy of a child born today is lower than the life expectancy of a child born in either Syria or Iraq, both 74. (Fairhill/North Philadelphia at 71 and North Strawberry Mansion at 68) In the well-off Society Hill neighborhood life expectancy is 88 years.

What explains this 20-year gap? In brief, racist policing, mass incarceration. Institutional racism. poverty, lack of access to healthcare, homicide (a homicide rate ten times that of whites), an educational system that does not educate, inadequate housing, and high rates of structural unemployment.

According to the Pew Trust: "At 25.7 percent, the (Philadelphia) poverty rate is the highest among the nation's 10 largest cities. About 400,000 residents—including roughly 37 percent of the city's children under the age of 18—live below the federal

poverty line.” Philadelphia is ranked 3rd in income inequality, behind only Atlanta and New Orleans.

[Note: The U.S. has a complex array of national and “racial” issues. Some of these were addressed by the old SWP, but a lot of this analysis is 50 years old. We need a series of discussions on the Chicano-Mexicano question, the Black liberation question, the Puerto Rican question and the question of indigenous/Native people.]

Indigenous Peoples

The United States of America is built on the enslavement and murder of Africans and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. In 1500, the North American Indigenous population was more than 12 million; by 1900 they were reduced to around 237,000. This was not a simple result of virgin soil epidemics, but of concerted efforts by colonial powers to eliminate Indigenous resistance and appropriate their lands for imperial exploitation.

From the Trail of Tears and forced resettlement onto reservations to the Indian Boarding Schools, the United States have attempted to rob North American Indigenous peoples of their lands, cultures, languages, and lives, and continue to do so today. Despite these efforts, there are more than 2 million Native Americans and Indigenous Alaskans, in about 300 language and tribal groups living in the area claimed by the United States.

Indigenous peoples remain subject to above average poverty and lower life expectancy in cities and reservations as a result of colonization. Institutional racism blocks equal access to education and employment. Racist stereotypes persist in sports mascots, popular culture, and symbols. Thousands of native women and girls have been assaulted, murdered, and have disappeared while law enforcement looks the other way. At least 5700 Native American and Indigenous Alaskan women and girls disappeared in 2016 alone, and they are at least twice as likely to be raped or sexually assaulted as non-Indigenous women.

Energy and mining companies continue to steal and destroy the lands of Indigenous peoples. When they resist, as they did at Standing Rock, they are met with further government repression. Indigenous people are 3 times more likely to be killed by cops than whites and are incarcerated at a rate 38% higher than the national average. Indigenous men are incarcerated at a rate 4 times that of white men, and Native women are incarcerated 6 times more frequently than white women.

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rican people occupy a unique position in the U.S. -- both a colonized people and an oppressed nationality inside the borders of the country. (This is not a full analysis of the Puerto Rican national question.) Puerto Ricans lack full representation in the U.S. political system (no voting member of Congress and cannot vote in federal elections) despite Puerto Ricans being U.S. citizens. The island is neither a sovereign nation or a state. As revolutionary socialists, we support decolonization, reparations, and self-determination for Puerto Rico. We also fight for the full social, political, and economic equality for Puerto Rican people in the U.S.

The double impact of hurricanes Maria and Irma left the island devastated, thousands were left without power, sanitation, food, or basic supplies. The intensity of these storms can be attributed to climate change. The response after the hurricanes is the result of decades of racist neglect. The response of the Trump administration was to attack Puerto Ricans saying that they “want everything done for them” playing to the stereotype of Latino/as “lazy.” Trump chose the moment to play to his racist base.

A year after the hurricanes, [*Rolling Stone*](#) wrote: “...Puerto Rico has not recovered. In fact, it’s arguably as close to collapse as it has ever been. The power is on and the roads are open, but if you look closely, the entire island is held together with duct tape and baling wire. Tens of thousands of people are still living under the blue tarps that were installed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency on houses that had their roofs blown off during the storm. Engineers are still discovering bridges that are in danger of collapsing, and every time it rains, new leaks are found in concrete foundations. Unlike, say, New York after Hurricane Sandy, there is no sense that the rebuilding is guaranteed, or that there is a better future ahead. Many Puerto Ricans I meet feel that with one more modest storm, it will all come tumbling down again.”

The post-hurricane power crisis exposed the weaknesses of the ill-maintained power grid and backwards power generation system. Power generation in Puerto Rico is all based on aging fossil fuel burning plants, which requires diesel fuel or coal be imported from outside of the island.

The aftermath of the hurricanes also sparked an increased migration to the mainland of the U.S. Puerto Rican communities in the U.S., in places like New York, Philadelphia and Hartford, mobilized in solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico following the hurricanes demanding immediate relief from the federal government and raising aid through community organizations, unions and churches.

Poverty in Puerto Rico was already high before the hurricanes - 43.5%, or 3 times the rate on the mainland, and the island experienced a decade of negative GDP growth before the storms. The U.S. Congress imposed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), which established a seven-member Financial Oversight and Management Board which is charged with managing Puerto Rico's significant \$70 billion debt. What this has meant is austerity and loss of local control over decision making as the "Junta" imposed solutions from above. In the years before the hurricanes, 10 percent of the population of the island had already emigrated to the mainland. Since the storms, thousands more have moved to the states with most of these going to Florida or the Northeast (NY, NJ, PA) corridor.

This year, a mass movement forced the resignation of Gov. Ricardo Rosselló after a series of text messages attacking political opponents and storm victims were revealed. The content of the texts was sexist and homophobic.

As we wrote in [Socialist Action](#) at the time: "... the publication of the vulgar conversations by Rossello and his close associates was the straw that broke the camel's back. Rossello's administration was already embroiled in a corruption scandal, with two former officials arrested on July 10 for funneling some \$15.5 million in contracts to businesses with which they had personal ties. Protests grew rapidly, with ferocity, demanding the resignation of the governor. The movement became known as #RickyRenuncia, echoing the #MeToo movement's self-designation. This could be said to reflect the queer and feminist character of a layer of the protests, with many protesters working to have a visible queer presence."

Women's struggles

"Struggles by women against their oppression as a sex are interrelated with, but not totally dependent on or identical with, struggles by workers as a class. Women cannot win their liberation except in alliance with the organized power of the working class. But this historical necessity in no way means that women should postpone any of their struggles until the current labor officialdom is replaced by a revolutionary leadership that picks up the banner of women's liberation. Nor should women wait until the socialist revolution has created the material basis for ending their oppression. On the contrary, women fighting for their liberation must wait for no one to show them the way. They should take the lead in opening the fight and carrying it forward. In doing so, they will play a leadership role within the workers movement as a whole and can help create the

kind of class struggle leadership necessary to advance on all fronts.” [*Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women’s Liberation*](#)

Women’s hard-won rights are under a sustained attack. The far right has succeeded in incrementally rolling back abortion rights at the Federal and state level since the Roe decision. Trump ran on the promise to appoint judges who would overturn Roe V Wade and has acted to appoint judges to the Federal bench who will follow through on this promise. From the Hyde amendment to the present, there has been a constant offensive to restrict women’s reproductive rights.

“Since 1973, over 1900 abortion restrictions have been passed. About ⅓ of these have been passed since 2011. These restrictions have included mandatory waiting periods, restrictions on state funding, no requirement for insurance to cover abortion, state mandated counseling, parental consent laws, gestational limits, and hospital requirements.” [*The Ongoing Struggle For Abortion Rights*](#) by Heather Bradford

Since 2016, right wing forces in various states have enacted laws placing odious restrictions on women’s right to choose. In 2016, 18 states passed 50 restrictions of various types. Since Trump took office, states have enacted further restrictions and, in some cases, laws that effectively outlaw abortion. So far, Federal courts have delayed struck the worst of these laws down.

This year, Alabama, Georgia, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Mississippi passed restrictive legislation. The worst of these was the Alabama law effectively outlawed abortion, imposed prison sentences on abortion providers and offered no exceptions for rape or incest. The heartbeat bills passed in the other states (Georgia, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, and Mississippi) mentioned imposed an abortion ban after 6 weeks of pregnancy. Missouri’s ban was after 8 weeks.) So far, these laws have been blocked by Federal courts.

Trump has increased attacks on women in the workplace, refused to take action on pay equity, and attacked childcare funding. Job training programs have been slashed under Trump. Food assistance cuts adversely affect women and families.

The women’s marches following Trump’s rise to power were the largest in U.S. history -- more than 3 million protesters in more than 600 cities. This was part of a larger global mobilization of women organized through the *International Women’s Strike* movement that has mobilized women and their supporters in more than 50 countries. The Women’s Marches mobilized a broad cross section of women. Bourgeois feminist

organizations have pushed for support for Democrats to counter the reactionary policies of Trump.

What has grown out of the movement are two counterposed lines of march. One is towards assimilation into the corporate and government world and the alternative points in a different direction.

“Faced with these two visions of feminism, we find ourselves at a fork in the road, our choice bears extraordinary consequences for humankind. One path leads to a scorched planet where human life is immiserated to the point of unrecognizability, if indeed it remains possible at all. The other points to the sort of world that has always figured centrally in humanity’s most exalted dreams: a just world whose wealth and natural resources are shared by all, and where equality and freedom are premises, not aspirations.

“The contrast could not be starker. But what makes the choice pressing for us now is the absence of any viable middle way. We owe the dearth of alternatives to neoliberalism: that exceptionally predatory, financialized form of capitalism that has held sway across the globe for the last forty years. Having poisoned the atmosphere, mocked every pretense of democratic rule, stretched our social capacities to their breaking point, and worsened living conditions generally for the vast majority, this iteration of capitalism has raised the stakes for every social struggle, transforming sober efforts to win modest reforms into pitched battles for survival.” *Feminism for the 99%*
Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, Nancy Fraser

Radical Feminism sees the main division in society as based on the divide between men, the oppressors, and women, the oppressed. This outlook lacks the analysis of class dynamics and other forms of oppression in society that can offer a more fully-rounded alternative to the oppression of women. This has led to some Radical Feminists adapting to conservative ideas as they argue for the exclusion of Trans women and seek to deny trans women basic access to health care, women’s organizations, sports, and restroom facilities. Far right organizations are using the division in the women’s movement caused by trans exclusion to try to pit cis and trans women against each other. Arch-conservative anti-women organizations like the Heritage Foundation and Alliance for Defending Freedom have enlisted TERFs into their milieu of anti-worker talking heads and collaborators. Marxist-Feminism and dialectical materialism not only allow the revolutionary working class to properly analyze where trans and non-binary oppression comes from, they also give a method to forming a fighting women’s and LGBTQIA+ movements that are inclusive of all types of women and non-binary people.

The main line feminist organizations like NOW and NARAL have proved ineffective at mounting a determined resistance to attacks on women's rights. But young militant women are increasing relating to the socialist feminist milieu inspired by the International Women's Strikes globally and anchored by the reformist DSA socialist feminist caucuses. They are leading national organizing for a "strike" should Roe seem about to be rolled back by the Supreme Court. SR should deepen our work in this milieu and work to extend our understanding of socialist feminism and social reproduction theory. On the organizational front, we should take conscious steps to recruit and develop women as cadres.

LGBTQIA+ Struggles

The *Fourth International* document, [On Lesbian/Gay Liberation](#), offers us a beginning foundation for situating the LGBTQIA+ liberation struggle in our overall struggle against capitalism.

"Beginning with the radicalization of the late 1960s, activists have called for going beyond struggles for lesbian/ gay rights in order to demand full lesbian/gay liberation, which implies a withering away of the capitalist family as an institution and challenging the heterosexual norm imposed by the capitalist state. Although this call has become less prominent in the movements since the 1980s, the Fourth International sees complete equality and freedom for both women and LGBT people as requiring socializing the functions of the family, which can be fully achieved only with the overthrow of capitalism. In supporting struggles for lesbian/gay rights we seek to build bridges between current demands and the ultimate goal of lesbian/ gay liberation, which we see as linked to the ultimate goal of socialist revolution."

Our perspective must be based on a conscious effort to integrate the fight against oppression into our work and into the life of our organization.

Beating back the Trump attack

Trump has also launched an all-out assault on LGBTQIA+ rights in healthcare, employment, housing, education, the military, prisons and sports. This year, Trump chose the anniversary of marriage equality to speak to a conference organized by the anti-LGBTQIA+ *Faith and Freedom Coalition* on the topic of religious "freedom." (that is to say, the freedom to discriminate) Trump said, "When I asked for your support in 2016, Americans of faith were under assault, but the shameful attempt to suppress religious believers ended the day I took the oath of office." The crowd responded with chants of "4 more years!"

The Trump Dept of Justice is pushing to make it legal to discriminate against, including firing, people for their sexual identity, effectively reversing civil rights protections for millions of people. The DOJ has argued that sexual orientation and identity are not covered under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by arguing for a narrow definition of “sex” as determined by being born with male or female genitalia -- an attack on both Trans and Intersex people. Trump has also sought to reverse protections for Trans people in healthcare, banned Transgendered people from military service, and eliminating protections for trans students.

Transgender people are twice as likely to live in poverty than the general population. Transgender people are more likely to become homeless, face the threat of violence daily -- both from cops and in society as a whole. In the past year, there have been more than 331 murders of gender diverse and Trans people worldwide.

As was noted in the Permanent Revolution Tendency Special Bulletin, [The Fight For Trans Rights and Gender Self-ID](#):

“The repercussions of a new and more rigid official government definition of gender could be far-ranging. It could lead to even more intense struggles over access to bathrooms, appropriate health care, and legal protections at work. Furthermore, the administration’s sanctioning of anti-transgender bigotry will lead to a wider acceptance of discrimination and abuse far beyond the reading of the law.

“Unsurprisingly, the members of the working class who do not fit neatly into ideal and abstract gender categories face a great deal of difficulties. Workplace discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation is not explicitly prohibited in U.S. federal law or in most states, and trans people report their facing discrimination in massive numbers. Transgender people are more likely to face employment discrimination, poverty, housing discrimination, homelessness, and police violence, and are disproportionately victims of homicide—especially trans women of color. And trans people are, rather astonishingly, 25 times more likely to have attempted suicide.

“The definition proposed by the Trump administration is arbitrary and unscientific, but reflects an ideologically constructed notion of strict categories in nature that reactionaries uphold. The notion of the gender binary, and the enforcement of gender roles, has been a feature of capitalist development.” *Trump Administration Attacks Trans Rights*, Autumn Rain and Erwin Freed

Teen Vogue wrote:

“[In 28 U.S. states](#), queer and trans workers can still be fired due to their sexual orientation and gender identity, and a strong [union contract](#) is often the only legally binding workplace protection available to LGBTQIA workers to fight employment [discrimination](#). This is especially important because of the high unemployment rates for transgender and non-binary people — [16% overall](#) — which can be [compounded](#) by [other factors](#) like racial discrimination, age discrimination, or national origin discrimination.”

For several decades, the LGBTQIA+ movement has been dominated by liberal forces and at times utilized by corporations and even the Israeli apartheid state to pink wash themselves. The liberal wing of the movement has been pushing for representation and marriage equality. While both are not bad demands in and of themselves, they stop short of addressing very real concerns for LGBTQIA+ people, such as the repeated murders by cops, the epidemic of queer youth homelessness and universal access to gender affirming healthcare. In the same way that the liberal women’s movement stops at the representation of women in the ruling class, the liberal LGBTQIA+ movement does the same.

The current movement compositions do not mean that LGBTQIA+ rights are inherently liberal. Instead, it means that socialists have either not done enough or were too weak to build and lead these movements. Much of the recent movement was built out of AIDS organizing and then marriage equality in the 90s and 2000s. That was also a time when Marxist organizations were declining and the working class was in retreat.

There are some signs that a more radical orientation to LGBTQIA+ struggles is brewing. In terms of the most recent struggles of black lives matter and for immigrant rights, some of the strongest and most enthusiastic leaders identify as trans, or queer.

Furthermore, the NYC pride marches are miles of corporate floats with few if any activist oriented marches, as well as cops, and zero ability for ordinary people to participate without special permission. In July of 2019, the reclaim pride coalition organized a reclaim pride march. The march was explicitly political and featured a broad range of speakers advocating to re-politicize pride, and organize for black lives matter, immigrant rights and more.

The march attracted some 40,000 participants and occurred at the same day and time of the mainstream pride march. This march occurred on the 50th anniversary of Stonewall, and it provides some insight into the direction of the LGBTQIA+ movement.

Again, as in the case of the women's movement, the best results are not gained from lobbying and campaigning for Democrats. For the women's movement, and the LGBTQIA+ movements, the greatest gains have been made through independent mass action. Our starting point is to ask, "which side are we on?" Our resounding answer is "always with the oppressed."

Climate crisis is a global problem

The prospect of a global climate catastrophe must be central to our considerations as revolutionaries. Capitalist patterns of development, the drive for profits and capital accumulation, energy production, and the undemocratic organization of work and work are all factors in the rush towards disaster.

In short, humanity is headed for a cliff and only the socialist reconstruction of society worldwide can avert disaster. The revolutionary movement must internalize the scientific logic behind the movement's emphasis on a 10 year window in which humanity must massively lower fossil fuel emissions and forest destruction on pain of setting off feedback loops that include epochal methane releases from melting permafrost and a degenerated Amazon forest, turning the earth into a place unlike any space ever inhabited by humans. Already, huge swaths of the planet are doomed to be uninhabitable by humans within the century. Changes baked into the warming future include almost certain disruptions of capitalist food production, water shortages, and the migration of millions of workers and farmers seeking a viable home. We must dive deeper and ever more quickly into the movement to mitigate climate change and to prevent the disempowering of the class by the dystopia being planned in the short term by global elites. This means doing everything in our power to build powerful bonds of solidarity among all of those whose lives are already threatened, disrupted, and demeaned by climate chaos and turning those networks of solidarity into the bones of the new movement we need.

The youth climate strikes and campus actions like the protest during the Yale-Harvard football game point to the potential activism and radicalization of youth as they try to avert catastrophe.

We recognize that the proposed Green New Deal is inadequate and unenforceable -- its provisions far too little, too late. Despite the gross inadequacy of the Green New Deal,

we recognize that it has meant the mainstreaming of the still inchoate movement idea that climate action must be linked with a massive jobs program and a push against environmental racism has set the new, “common sense” baseline at which strategic discussions begin.

Our main tasks are the development of a clear orientation to imminent crisis and the necessary emergency solutions as seen by ecosocialists. We must immediately force a stop to all new fracking and drilling. We must put the energy companies under democratic public ownership and use their billions to carry out emergency transition.

Revolutionists need to develop a Transitional program and demands to address this crisis while recognizing the need to win gains today as we struggle for a socialist reconstruction of society. We struggle against big capitalist interests but also reject the notion of Green capitalist solutions as only half measures that are doomed to fail.

The transition from the current economic set-up, with its reliance on fossil fuels and a model of mass commodity production, to a more sustainable economy requires an emergency transition to production for human needs instead of profits, a reconstruction of our industries and transportation system to mitigate the impact of human activity on the climate, and a complete change in how we produce and use energy. Presently, 80% of energy consumption based on fossil fuels.

Such a transition is unimaginable without the kind of massive centralized effort of national, state, and local governments directed by those free of commitments to the fossil fuel industry. The fight for this project can only be led successfully by socialists willing to win millions to break with common sense notions of the sanctity of private property. The popularity of the reformist program of re-nationalization of energy, transport, and some production by the British Labor Party provides a basis on which to begin the work of making this a realistic prospect, first to the vanguard of the climate and other social movements, and then to the millions.

Climate catastrophe is the axis around which all militarism, surveillance, immigration, corporate rivalry, inter-imperialist rivalry and fascist efforts circle. It is the imminent crisis that spurs the rallying cry of workers control and workers government. It is the main current framework for attacks on women and gender oppression.

Organized labor is an essential component of the climate movement. While some unions, including teachers and public sector unions, have been supportive of a sustainable future, others have expressed opposition to changes that will cost their members jobs.

During protests against the Dakota Access pipeline at Standing Rock some unions, including the Communications Workers, United Electrical Workers, National Nurses United, and the Amalgamated Transit Union, supported the protesters. AFL-CIO top Richard Trumka [“issued a statement discounting Native American claims and urging that work on the pipeline resume.”](#) Building Trades supported the construction as well.

More recently, the heads of the [Building Trades](#) unions, alongside the leaders of the United Steelworkers and the United Mine Workers (UMWA), spoke out against the proposed Green New Deal. They claim that the GND will “cause immediate harm to millions of our members and their families.” Right wing [Climate Deniers](#) (the same people who push anti-labor policies) immediately seized on union opposition to the GND as proof that proponents of this modest resolution are out of touch with reality.

Essential to building a movement capable of winning labor and the majority is popularizing a vision of new economic, social, and cultural order in which liberation is possible. We must paint a picture of the ways in which labor can be reduced and life organized wondrously in sync with the limits of the planet. This requires a level of creativity that has been missing from the ecosocialist intervention into the movement. We also must reimagine how work itself is organized. Do rich people need more luxury apartments, while thousands sleep in their cars or on sidewalks? How many strip malls do we need, when schools and infrastructure are in disrepair? Who decides?

The U.S. is not exempt

Earlier this year, the midwestern region of the U.S. (Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas) suffered record flooding due to a March blizzard followed by a quick temperature rise to 60 degrees Fahrenheit and rainstorms. This combination of factors and higher than normal rainfall caused record flooding in the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. More than one million acres of land in 9 grain producing states was affected. Additionally, more than 14 million people were impacted by the floods.

Hurricane Florence hit the Carolina coast in September of 2018 with major flooding, dumping 40' of rain on North and South Carolina -- leaving hundreds stranded, more than 500,000 without power, and at least 45 dead. Many residents of the region had not anticipated the extent of the flooding from the slow-moving storm, and hundreds required emergency evacuation. Florence was the worst rainstorm to hit the East Coast of the United States in recorded history. This past September, Hurricane Dorian, one of the most powerful hurricanes in history, struck the Bahama Islands, leaving more than 70,000 homeless.

As the Atlantic Ocean warms, hurricanes have increased in frequency and intensity. The journal *Science* concluded, from a study of 2017 tropical storms and hurricanes, including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, that “the increase in 2017 major hurricanes was not primarily caused by La Niña conditions in the Pacific Ocean, but mainly by pronounced warm sea surface conditions in the tropical North Atlantic.” The study noted that they anticipate an increase in the number of hurricanes as surface temperatures continue to rise.

Sea levels are rising and the rate of sea level rise is increasing as oceans warm and glaciers melt. About 40% of the U.S. population live in vulnerable coastal regions. As sea levels rise, coastal flooding in seaside communities has increased exponentially. Higher sea levels mean that hurricane-related storm surges are more destructive. Eight of the world's 10 largest cities are located in coastal areas.

California Burning

According to the National Geographic, “Over the past century, California has warmed by about 3 degrees Fahrenheit, more than the global average of about one-degree Fahrenheit. Hotter air draws water out of plants and soils more efficiently than cool, leaving the trees, shrubs, and rolling grasslands of the state dry and primed to burn.” Summertime air temperatures in California have warmed by more than 3.5 degrees. The number and intensity of fires in California has increased with 15 of the 20 largest fires in the state’s history having occurred since 2000.

Radically changed weather patterns, including high winds, flooding, sea level rise, more intense storms, and drought are consequences of climate change. As these sorts of weather events continue to worsen, populations in the U.S. may be dislocated and there is a very real possibility of catastrophic crop failures.

In the last few years, climate catastrophes have impacted millions and millions of working people in the U.S. Eight million suffered from Sandy. Thirteen million were hit by Harvey. Fourteen million suffered from the flooding in the Midwest this year. Add in the former effect of hurricanes that leveled Puerto Rico and the Caribbean homes of hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers in the U.S. It is becoming difficult to find a region of the country in which working people have been spared a recent brush with climate induced catastrophe and millions remain without homes, jobs, or the means of individual recovery.

Capitalism offers no humane solutions to these massive threats. The only solution to climate crisis is a planned socialist economy that produces for human needs and a sustainable future. It is increasingly clear that the political road to such an economy runs through the radicalization and mobilization of working people in the effort to save us all from climate catastrophe.

Political system in crisis

Austerity, education cuts, and plant closings have punished whole communities over the past period. The two capitalist parties have been complicit in these attacks on the living standards of working people — sometimes openly, at other times more covertly.

The current political crisis has its roots in 40 years of employers' offensive, the great recession, and the rise of occupy. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement also rose in response to a criminal justice emergency facing the Black community. Mass incarceration, racist policing, and police violence have moved a layer of Black youth to resist what is really an existential threat. This includes the mass explosions in Ferguson and Baltimore, where young people and their community supporters fought cops in the streets.

Unfortunately, the state of the Black liberation movement is not as highly developed as in past periods of radicalization. There is not a contemporary radical national effort to tie struggles together comparable to the Black Power movement, the Black Panther Party, or the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Much of the activism is local and often involved with the Democratic Party - either directly or through NGO's.

Because of our own demographic composition, we are not in a position to alter this situation through the direct contribution of a group of cadres. We can, however, throw ourselves into any and all struggles that affect the Black community. We reaffirm the value of our historic understanding of Black nationalism in the making of the revolution in the United States. We must continue to make visible the material developed in the sixties and seventies by the SWP, including the Transitional Program for Black Liberation, the documented experiences of National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP), and the works of George Breitman.

The Democrats and Republicans have played "good cop-bad cop" for decades while telling working people and the oppressed that the two parties of Wall Street are the only viable alternatives. Distrust of bourgeois political institutions is high. It's in this context

that Trump rode to the White House on a wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric, Islamophobia, false promises, and economic nationalism. The best the Democrats had to offer as an alternative to Trump was Hillary Clinton, an unpopular candidate with high negative ratings. Trump's promise to "drain the swamp" in Washington resonated with some.

Trump, much like the Brexiters in Britain, represents a wing of the ruling class that has not fully benefited from neoliberalism with its free trade deals and turn towards more protectionism. This is reasoning behind the turn to America First rhetoric, immigrant bashing, climate denial, and racism. We note the way he repeatedly and consciously emboldens and energizes the populist and neo-fascist far right, normalizing their views as part of mainstream political discourse. Hate crimes and racist incidents have increased under his administration.

By staying in campaign mode after taking office, Trump can keep his hardcore base in motion. It is important to note that the far right also made important gains under Obama. The Tea Party, which had some elements of a proto-fascist movement, was given encouragement by the GOP establishment and took a significant number of seats in Congress.

Liberals and labor bureaucrats have put a lot of emphasis on Russiagate to delegitimize Trump. While we waited for the Mueller report to appear, we heard repeated assertions of Russian collusion. While it does appear that there was a Russian disinformation campaign in 2016, it's not altogether clear that this campaign had a decisive effect on the outcome of the election.

Further, considering the repeated U.S. government interference in elections around the world, the outrage from our political elites is laughable. Now, the Democrats seem to be pinning their hopes on impeachment while the Republicans rage about unfairness and witch hunts.

Workers don't have a real stake in the impeachment battle over whether Trump withheld military aid to Ukraine in exchange for "dirt" on Joe Biden and his son. It's more like a falling out among bandits. The possibility that Biden's son was involved with shady business dealings is real. Trump's faux outrage about "corruption" is ridiculous.

Right now, Trump lags in the polls in key states and the number of people who favor impeachment has risen. Both capitalist parties lack real legitimacy among large sections of the population -- 43% of eligible voters (100 million) stayed home on election day 2016.

The Democrats have acted to burnish the reputation of the CIA and FBI in the face of Trump's attacks on the "deep state" and have adopted saber-rattling rhetoric on North Korea, Syria, and Russia.

While the GOP are seen as an enemy of labor, women and the oppressed, in 2016, Trump postured about coal miners, steel mills, and auto workers with one breath and praised anti-union right-to-work laws with the next.

Trump's right wing populism and America First rhetoric is designed to sell the economic and foreign policy shifts of a wing of the ruling class that has not been gaining enough from the neoliberal trade regimes of the last decades and believes that salvation may come through protectionism and busting up the old agreements. Thus, Trump appeals for nostalgia for the thriving steel and auto manufacturing cities of the 50s and 60s. The destruction of the Rust Belt was due to the logic of a capitalist system based on maximized profits above all else. Of course, the blame went to foreign workers and corporations, environmental laws, unions, and high taxes. The union bureaucracy played their role as accomplices well by organizing Buy American campaigns and failing to educate their ranks about the nature of the crisis.

Trump's right populism is akin to the anti-immigrant and isolationist politics of the mass right wing electoral parties in Europe and the organized effort to separate Britain from the European Union. These parties stoke resentment of migrants and Muslims while claiming to be advocates for the victims of this system. This has helped rob the mass reformist (Communist and Social-Democratic) and neo-reformist of their working class base as these parties have become willing enforcers of neoliberal policies.

Trump has, however, fulfilled his promises to the rich, rolling back environmental and workplace regulations, dramatically increasing military spending, and cutting taxes for the wealthiest. Ruling class unease with Trump isn't with his policies. Rather, the problem posed by Trump is his instability, such as changing a long-held policy at the drop of a tweet.

The Democrats are having difficulty arriving at an alternative to Trump. The already-crowded field of candidates has been joined by former NYC Mayor Bloomberg and [Deval Patrick](#), former Governor of Massachusetts.

Bloomberg's decision to run is motivated by the stumbling campaign of Joe Biden. Biden, the DNC and CNN anointed front-runner, has slipped in the polls and, at times, seems disoriented on the debate stage. Biden's fundraising has suffered and lags after Warren and Sanders. The Democrats' strategy seems based on the assumption that

revulsion at Trump's corruption, crudity, and rhetoric is enough to propel their eventual nominee to the White House. Shortly after Bloomberg entered the campaign, he was forced to publicly apologize for the racist "stop and frisk" policy he supported while Mayor of NYC.

Patrick, described as "somewhere between Warren and Biden" ideologically was, until very recently, a partner at Mitt Romney's Bain Capital. Patrick hopes to appeal to Black voters and create an Obama style campaign but his campaign has failed to catch on. Biden, despite his blunders still appeals to Black voters. The white centrist hope, Mayor Pete, who recently rose to first place in Iowa, fails to excite Black voters and has struggled with race and police issues in his city.

More recently, Obama, stepped into the fray, saying that the electorate "don't want to see crazy stuff" like universal health care or liberal social policies. The former President also indicated his willingness to participate in a "stop Bernie" campaign.

Democrats' Rotten Record

The record of the Democrats over the past 30 years should be enough to dissuade working people and oppressed nationalities from supporting them. Bill Clinton brought us NAFTA, continued wars, mass incarceration, and the destruction of welfare programs. The promised labor law reform was forgotten.

Under G.W. Bush, the Democrats went along with the expansion of the national security state and multiple wars overseas. The liberal wing of the antiwar movement consciously demobilized in order to not embarrass the Democrats in Presidential election cycles.

Much of the so-called resistance to Trump is stage-managed by organizations and leaderships tied to the Democratic Party. Certainly, the mass mobilizations in the early months of the Trump administration — the Women's March and the airport demonstrations — were initiated by forces close to the Democrats. Of course, this doesn't mean that revolutionaries abstain from attending these sorts of protests. Our interventions must take these factors into account. The Democrats see mass actions as a way to stimulate electoral participation by the liberal wing of the party, while revolutionaries see these sorts of actions as having a potential radicalizing effect on the consciousness of participants.

Under Obama, labor law reform once again failed to materialize, the imperialist wars overseas continued, and the PATRIOT Act was renewed. The Democrats counterposed a \$10.10/hr minimum wage to the popular demand for \$15/hr with the active participation of AFL-CIO tops. Under Obama, mass incarceration and Federal neglect of

the epidemic of police brutality continued. Obama earned the nickname of “deporter in chief.”

In 2016, the Sanders bid for the Democratic nomination was defeated by DNC dirty tricks and manipulations. Sanders, ever the loyal opposition, fulfilled his promise to support the eventual nominee. A layer of the activists who had been energized by Sanders became disillusioned with the Democratic Party after a close look at the machinations of the party. In the current 2020 contest, Bernie is not attracting the overwhelming youth support that he did 4 years ago. Many Democratic progressives are placing their hopes in the Republican turned Democrat Liz Warren. The DSA and others on the left wing of the party sees a sort of left populism as the future of the party. The Democrats tolerate a left wing in their midst, but you can be assured that this “left” will only be allowed so much “space” in the party. The real levers of power are in the DNC which is beholden to Wall Street interests.

One aspect of the 2016 Sanders primary contest was his use of the word “socialist” to describe his policies, sparking more interest in socialist ideas. Sanders alone does not deserve singular credit for the uptick in interest in socialism. The 2008 financial crisis de-legitimized capitalism in the eyes of a layer of young people.

In the 2020 elections, the Democrats face a left challenge from Sanders and Warren. The “leftism” of Sanders and Warren consist of liberal programs. While Sanders still uses the rhetoric of democratic socialism and Warren asserts her loyalty to capitalism, neither of these campaigns offers any real alternative to the problems of a capitalist system in crisis. The social democratic DSA, and some former sections of the far left, including former ISO leaders and members, have been diverted into the Bernie campaign.

The Democratic Party wants to appeal to progressive-minded youth but can’t move beyond the framework defined by their support for imperialism and Israel. The alleged resistance to Trump in the Democratic Party has been unable to express any real criticism of the apartheid state. The main contenders for the Democratic nomination in 2020 remain supportive of Israel.

Youth and workers increasingly see the capitalist system as the root of the problem. The reformist campaigns inside the Democratic only work to create or reinforce illusions in the possibility that the Democrats can be “used” or reformed by the left to push for socialism. For workers and oppressed people, the Democratic remains a trap and political dead end.

There remains a lot of confusion about what socialism means and what it would look like. A recent Nation magazine article using the U.S. military as an example of “socialism” is a stunning example of this.

For the socialist left, our task in the coming period is to explain the nature of the Democrats and to point the way towards an alternative based on the self activity and independence of the working class and the oppressed. This may include the possibility of socialist candidates for office on a common program and advocacy of a Labor Party based on fighting unions and organizations of the oppressed.

Far right mobilizations

The growth and evolution of the U.S. far right, a complex array of neo-fascist, racist, neo-confederate, religious movements and organizations, parallels the continued rightward drift of the GOP. We reject the ultraleft notion that the Trump administration or the GOP are fascist. “Trumpism” has captured control of the GOP and can be defined as a contradictory mix of nativism, religious bigotry, economic populism, and libertarianism. As we have said before, Trumps anti-immigrant, Islamophobic campaign rhetoric energized the far right across the board. As one Klan leader said, “Trump has set us free.” Under Trump, there has also been an increase in anti-Semitic incidents and attitudes.

The neo-fascist far right is not a mass movement in the sense that our movement defined in in the 1930s-'40s. Fascism -- a movement called forth by a capitalist class in crisis and under threat by a rising workers movement -- is not “necessary” for the capitalists. So far, the ruling class can rely on the traditional political and state responses to crisis. If the capitalists faced with a deepening economic and social crisis in the coming period, this could change.

The rise of alt-right white nationalism and groupings like the Proud Boys, which define themselves as “western chauvinists,” marks an evolution away from the traditional neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan formations. The alt-right eschew Third Reich imagery but this is mostly cosmetic. Proud Boys have used images of the Chilean butcher Pinochet or the Italian fascist Mussolini. There is a real divide on the right between the “physical force” types, including traditional Klan and Nazis, and those who see an electoral road and try to find positions inside the GOP. This parallels the electoralist evolution of Western European far right parties which have rebuilt their images on opposition to immigration and economic nationalism.

The Charlottesville “Unite the Right” Rally exposed the alt-right as violent thugs as militia groups, Klan, Nazis and others converged to march and clash with anti-fascist protesters. The death of Heather Heyer was a shocking example of the potential danger of far-right violence. The night march by rightists in Charlottesville, where marchers chanted “Jews will not replace us” was a chilling example of the new right’s growing combativity. After Heyer was killed, Trump refused to condemn the far right. Instead, he talked about “very fine people, on both sides...”

Since Charlottesville, far right groups have continued to mobilize -- in Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, Portland, OR, Boston, and elsewhere. Portland has seen repeated clashes between anti-fascists and the Proud Boys and their allies. In some places, Proud Boys have threatened to attack meetings of left organizations like the DSA. In Philadelphia, armed Proud Boys went to the homes of anti-fascist activists late at night, including the home of an anti-fascist researcher and labor activist.

While a mass fascist movement is not on the immediate horizon, the possibility of violent terror incidents is very real. Often these come in the guise of “lone wolf” attacks like the El Paso Walmart shooting or the Tree of Life Synagogue shootings. Many on the far-right draw inspiration from the Turner Diaries, a manual for fascist terror disguised as a science fiction novel. (A copy of the Turner Diaries was found among the possessions of the El Paso shooter.) As the more extreme fringes of the right grow frustrated with incrementalism, the possibility of acts of terror may increase. (think The Order, Oklahoma City, etc.)

For Marxists, the best method for fighting the far right remains united front [counter-mobilization](#). We don’t rely on capitalist politicians, courts, or cops to protect us.

Farrell Dobbs wrote:

“In a given country at a particular time when the bourgeoisie opens this chapter, there will be one or another degree of democratic rights. Our situation is one where there are on the law books a somewhat extensive body of formal democratic rights won by the masses in the history of the class struggle in the U.S. The approach of the ruling class is to begin to move toward a deterioration of those rights.

“Their tactic is to protect the rights of the fascists while at the same time using fascist forces to try to keep others from exercising those rights.. One of the forces used to implement this is that most malevolent of all the repressive instruments of capitalist rule, the police forces. The police structure is of a character that makes it a breeding ground for fascists.”

Ultimately, fighting fascism and the far right depends on our ability to activate and mobilize the working class and its mass organizations, the unions as well as organizations of the oppressed. This includes, when necessary, building [defense guards](#) to protect meetings and counter rightist attacks.

Fighting the right also requires us to think about how we discuss with and reach out to military veterans. Veterans have the potential to be won to an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics. We should be aware that rightists and conspiracy theorists have their sights set on veterans and hope to mobilize them.

Rejecting right-left or red brown alliances

In our discussions in Socialist Action, we rejected the notion of red-brown or right-left alliances. At the time it was clear to us that the inclusion of such views in our antiwar work would have a continuing disorienting effect on our interventions and limit our ability to broaden the movement beyond the usual suspects. This also includes adaptation to reactionary conspiracy theories and the abandonment of the Marxist method.

Immigrants under attack

Trump's 2016 campaign, with his racist rhetoric about immigrants for Latin America (bad hombres, rapists, murderers) and Muslims provided a terrifying preview of his policies. His promise to build the wall has gone largely unfulfilled. But his ban on immigration from majority Muslim countries has sparked large protests.

The crisis at the border, where migrant families fleeing gang violence, crop failures, and government repression have tried to seek asylum, is a creation of Trump's policies. These policies aim to demoralize and terrorize migrants. The sight of migrant children in cages in filthy conditions sparked a mass outcry and demonstrations outside of ICE facilities across the country. "Abolish ICE!" went from a an unrealistic sounding slogan to a mass slogan overnight. As socialists, we want open borders and recognize all workers as part of our class regardless of their citizenship or documentation status. .

U.S. capitalists depend on the super-exploitation of immigrant labor. For the capitalist class, immigrant workers are also a convenient scapegoat for the problems faced by U.S. workers. In this context, attacks on immigrants have increased and both parties of the rich have played on anti-immigrant sentiment. George W. Bush deported 2 million and Obama, despite some limited pro-immigrant policies, deported more than 2.5 million.

Under Trump, the Federal government has pursued workplace raids, family separation and the caging of children at the border. The Supreme Court is currently considering whether the Obama era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program may be ended by the Trump administration. DACA covers more than 700,000 undocumented people who came to the U.S. as children, allowing them to work and study without fear of deportation. In recent speeches, Trump excoriated DACA holders as “hardened criminals.”

Trump’s rhetoric about immigrants as criminals, rapists, and murderers is intended to energize the most racist sections of his base and to sow terror in immigrant communities. The increase in migrants from Central America, specifically El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, is driven by factors such as climate-driven crop failures, political instability, government repression, and gang activity. LGBTQIA+ migrants are fleeing Central America to escape the very real threat of murder and violence. Asylum seekers are forced to stay in Mexico under crowded and unsafe conditions because of changes made to the asylum-seeking rules by the Trump administration. Trump aide, Stephen Miller, is one of the principal architects of Trump's immigration policy and has demonstrated ties to white nationalists.

Prepare for the struggles ahead

At the outset of the 1960’s youth radicalization, the Socialist Workers Party was emerging from the period of repression and anti-communist witch-hunting known as McCarthyism. They emerged from the red scare battered but not broken.

In this period, two great social movements, the Civil Rights Movement and the movement against the war in Vietnam emerged. Out of the ferment of these movements, the Black Power movement, the Black Panther Party, the feminist movement and the Gay Liberation movement sprang to life.

It was in this period that the SWP, through a generally correct policy in the antiwar movement, solidarity with Cuba, and orientation to the Black liberation movement was able to grow and build itself into a truly national revolutionary organization with roots in the international movement.

Today, the revolutionary left in the U.S. is emerging from decades of retreat and one-sided class war against working people.

We are faced with an existential threat to humanity in the form of the looming climate catastrophe. Building a broad, united front type movement to meet the climate crisis

must be at the center of our political and organizational perspectives. Building a mass international movement to avert climate catastrophe is linked to our efforts to revive the labor movement and sink roots into the working class.

We know that the working class and its allies are the only social force with the potential power to make the fundamental changes necessary to save the planet. Capitalist “solutions” to the climate crisis will not address the roots of the crisis. As the crisis deepens, causing crop failures, rising sea levels, and population dislocations, the capitalist class may opt for authoritarian methods of social control to save their own hides. This may include calling forth fascist elements.

Our tasks are not simple or easy. We have before us the work of defeating the far right, fighting police brutality and institutionalized racism, prison abolition, building the LGBTQIA+ movement, building a new independent feminist movement, and the revitalization of the labor movement.

Fighting for class political independence and class struggle unions is an urgent task. A strong rank-and-file based union movement is the key to defeating the union busters. Breaking the subordination of workers and their mass organizations to the Democrats is a central political task. Therefore, we fight for the founding of a Labor Party based in the unions and organizations of the oppressed.

We are a small revolutionary socialist organization. We understand that we alone are not going to be able to achieve all of the tasks put forward here. This is why we strive for the greatest possible unity in action of working people and of the revolutionary movement. We seek to regroup principled revolutionaries into an organization that can lay the basis for a mass revolutionary party - a party that is international as well as national in scope.

We have a world to win!