

No Pride at the Polls

"No pride at the polls?? But we finally have a chance to get some LGBT candidates in!"

Politicians are really sucking up to LGBT people this year. A "rainbow wave" of LGBT candidates includes politicians like Lupe Valdez, lesbian candidate for Texas governor, and Danielle Skidmore, trans woman running for Austin City Council. Article after article, fundraiser after fundraiser, tells us we should be proud to have this rainbow wave. After all, isn't the measure of success political representation? Isn't it a sign that things are getting better for us, and that someone will have us in mind while they push legislation and make deals?

REALITY CHECK: the "rainbow wave" is a sham.

We watched Barack Obama, the first black U.S. president, deport more immigrants than Bush did. Hillary Clinton, as Secretary of State, backed the Honduran coup that resulted in the assassination of the environmental activist Berta Cáceres – by mercenaries who were trained by the U.S. military. Robert "Beto" O'Rourke supports allowing the state to punish self-defense against police violence as a hate crime, as well as disarming Palestinians resisting Israeli occupation. We must know that LGBT elected officials, milestone or not, will act just as shamefully. Lupe Valdez is responsible for 11 inmate deaths by neglect during her time as Dallas sheriff. Danielle Skidmore is friendly with Oracle, the tech company that is pushing affordable housing out of Riverside.

When we cry for representation in this violent, oppressive system, what is it that we want so badly to be a part of? Why do we beg for a seat at a table built on exploited workers and other oppressed people? Why do we want to participate in a machine that murders oppressed nations people on our doorsteps and every corner of the globe? Capitalism-imperialism is literally destroying our planet — do we really want to be a part of that? If we are content with representation in media and government and boardrooms, oppressive institutions are allowed to claim sensitivity and inclusion, which lets them get away with even more exploitation in the meantime. Why do we want gay cops? Why do we want trans soldiers? Does violence from pigs feel less painful when it comes from someone more like us? The ruling class wants us to believe that participation in this system is the only way to fight against our oppression. The idea that we can "change things from the inside" has been stealing the passion and fire from the masses who are truly ready to fight for change for too long. It's time we put these myths to rest.

Myth #1: Politicians are our best hope for change.

No great change coming from within the monster of capitalism. No matter who we put in office, once there they become a part of the web and must cooperate and work alongside all the oppressive forces of capitalism, or be neutralized or booted out. Regardless of how "revolutionary" someone like Bernie Sanders may be, at the end of the day he is still caught in the web of checks and balances that keeps anything too radical from harming ruling class interests. The entire governmental system, from the city level to the federal level, is set up to maintain capitalism, and not a single candidate, despite their good intentions, can do anything within this system to escape these boundaries. We have never, not even once, seen the system truly change from "working on the inside." The system changes those who go into it, even those who start with the best intentions.

Even if a lot of progressive candidates were elected, the gigantic government bureaucracy with its millions of staff and managers and directors would still be in place, running business as usual. Government staff and lobbyists, loyal to capitalist interests, sharply control the actions of anyone who gets elected. The state also rules through the courts, the police, the military, and the prison system, and none of them would sit idly by if real pro-people reforms were attempted. When socialists have been elected to high positions in countries around the world, they have most often been overthrown by their own military. Other institutions safeguard

capitalism — including the school system, which insists on teaching racist, capitalist history regardless of the facts. A whole ideology of capitalism rules over us on the TV, in the news, online — all of which are controlled by the ruling elite and their CEOs. These servants of the ruling class cannot be voted away, and their power cannot be returned to the people only on the good intentions of a single progressive politician.

Not just one individual, ten individuals, or even hundreds of individuals with reactionary ideas in office or on the police force makes these institutions corrupt. And likewise, no individuals will change these institutions — they are oppressive and violent by nature. The only way to create real change is by rising up and smashing the tools of oppression ourselves.

Myth #2: Voting in local elections is worthwhile at least, since local government is more accountable to working class people.

Sometimes people argue that we can at least influence our local government through voting. Unfortunately, we have a clear picture of what local government does and whose interests they serve — and it will never be ours. The capitalist state exists to moderate the conflict between classes, it is an organ of class rule which legalizes and perpetuates the oppression of one class by another. Local or national government serve the rich and capitalist class, they protect their interests and by nature will do nothing to harm these interests. If local government were really listening to us, why do they allow police to shoot us in the streets, tech companies and developers to steal our cities, and K2 and hunger and violence to kill off working families? It's not as if people don't cry out; local politicians are just too busy trying to make deep-pocketed developers happy to actually listen. And this will not change by simply changing the people in office.

Robert Francis O'Rourke will not be a savior to the people any more than Ted Cruz has been. He may say some of the right words to pander to his targeted demographics, but this is what politicians have always done. In reality, Robert Francis is a multimillionaire co-founder of the tech company Stanton Street Technology Group, a partner in the real estate company Imperial Arms. His father-in-law is a billionaire whose several real estate companies wreaked havoc on the El Paso area before being sold off to larger corporations like GE. A real estate partner himself, how could we ever expect "Beto" to stand up for us, the very people that real estate corporations screw over every day?

Myth #3: Democrats will do less damage to human rights.

Some people say the Democrats are at least better than the Republicans, that a small step forward is at least a step forward. Why can't we vote to ensure that the "lesser evil" candidates make it into office while also fighting for revolution, why is it wrong to want to try to improve our conditions here and now?

All the Democrats' pretty words about human rights mask the fact they are merely promising to not oppress some people. Capitalism cannot exist without exploitation. By voting, we say "yes please" to unreliable promises of health coverage for our partners or different signs on our bathrooms, but voting also says "yes please" to the other things that come with those measures: the gentrification of our city, police violence against working people, and separating children from parents at the border. We know the whole system is rotten and must be destroyed — voting only strengthens what we're trying to break down. Why waste time and energy on choosing which pile of shit stinks less?

Myth #4: If we don't vote, right-wing Republicans win.

It's true Republicans don't want the working class or oppressed peoples to vote. Democrats and third parties desperately want workers and oppressed peoples to vote. It's easy to believe this means that voting is a progressive action that Republicans want to impede. The reality, however, is the Democrats and Republicans just have different approaches to competing for control of the same oppressive system. Republicans want us to be dejected and hopeless, while Democrats want us to completely believe in the system. Both methods are carried out for the same end: to continue capitalist exploitation and our misery without any opposition.

Both parties are command centers of imperialism, and doing what either of them wants is backwards. That's why we call for the third option, which no bourgeois party wants: actively boycotting and denouncing the sham elections. Refusing to cooperate with imperialism is the only true left-wing option, the only option that the people can use to win.

Myth #5: People don't vote because they are ignorant or lazy.

Almost half the people in this country, especially working-class people, just don't vote. During the 2016 elections, only 59.7% of all eligible citizens participated in the national election. Since it is important to take into account the phenomena of mass incarceration and a growing militarized police state prevented people from having the right to vote, this figure turns out even lower – only 55.7% of all people over the age of 18 voted. Though this figure is higher than the 2012 election, this is largely attributable to the fact that Clinton and Trump were two of the most despised candidates in U.S. history and the people voted out of hatred, with 37% of participants in a survey responding that they “strongly disliked” Clinton and 53% responding the same for Trump. During the 2014 midterms, turnout in Texas is even more dismal, with 28.5% of eligible voters turning out.

It is not out of ignorance or laziness; working class people just know that there is no point voting, it's just a waste of time in exchange for another betrayal. We know politicians are snakes who turn their backs on us after they are elected. Even the most honorable politician (as if such a thing exists!) who pushes for our rights will never be able to provide us true liberation.

Myth #6: We can vote AND fight for revolution at the same time.

Voting means buying into the lie that ruling class electoral politics has something to offer us, that we can win something when we play by their rules. But we know that the people themselves make history, not politicians who only want to maintain the status quo. Voting distracts us from building real revolution and gives people false hope that electoral politics is a viable way to change society. If we told people to vote, we would be dragging people who already know the system is fraudulent backwards, and not leading them forwards.

U.S. capitalism is in crisis because it is losing ground to other rising imperialist powers (primarily Russia and China), despite the need to continue to expand and accumulate the resources required for increasing production. To hold its grip on power, it must fall back on fascism and start revoking democratic freedoms. The fever dream of peaceful politics and legal action ignores the rising tide of violence against oppressed people. To focus on electoral politics means remaining unarmed, unprepared, and unorganized against imminent danger. We deserve more than the tepid rhetoric and action of the Democrats, Green Party, and Democratic Socialists.

By voting in the elections, we are forced to choose the interests of some over the interests of others. We are forced to decide that it's okay for the oppression of some people to continue as long as things are going to get better for ourselves. All over the world people demand the United States and other imperialist powers to be thrown off their lands. They are sick to death of their countries being sucked dry and their people being abused—we stand with these people and seek to bring an end to the parasitic system of capitalism imperialism. We simply cannot bring an end to this system while also participating in it.

There is no pride in being complicit in oppression, trading our consciences for scraps from the table of the capitalist class. Voting is a waste of time, makes us complicit, and keeps us sedated with false hope. Capitalism cannot be voted out, no matter who you vote for—so why should we play a game that we can never win?

So what are we doing instead of voting?

It will take the organized power of the masses, the working class and those who share the common interest of the destruction of capitalism, and the waging of a necessary and just revolutionary war, in order to destroy this

old and decrepit society and to build a new one where we can truly thrive. Anything less than this is a distraction, a waste of our time and energy. The only path forward is organizing and preparing the people to fight the ruling capitalist class.

A call to arms

It's clear by turnout numbers that huge sections of the population are already passively boycotting electoral systems. So many oppressed people already see the true nature of this system and know it gives them no power. We aim to ignite hope, transform this passive boycott into call to arms, and spread the word there IS political action which is truly effective — active revolutionary organizing.

Our organization seeks working class revolution — a revolution which takes up arms in rebellion against the capitalist state. This revolutionary road is the only viable path to freedom from the exploitation and violence that the capitalist system imposes on people living in the United States and millions of others abroad.

U.S. capitalism-imperialism is becoming more openly reactionary and has already begun to transform from a bourgeois democracy into fascism as the ruling class reaches the end of its rope. History has shown us the more that progressive movements threaten the capitalists' profits, the more they will snatch away democratic rights like gay marriage and due process. Now more than ever, revolutionary politics is an absolute necessity. Organizing people to actively boycott the elections allows real revolutionaries to consolidate those who already see the toxic nature of the ruling class electoral machine instead of pulling them backward into a system so many of us can all see as undemocratic and working in the interest of nobody but the capitalists.

Stopping the lies

Revolution requires a full ideological break with capitalist “democracy” and the bourgeois elections. By lending even an inch of legitimacy to these systems, instead of actively producing propaganda and spreading revolutionary ideas, we would be misleading the people along a road that travels completely opposite to the revolutionary road.

We start by pointing out the racist, capitalist lies of the school system, media, and entertainment industry that serve to keep us in despair that the system can ever be changed. The people need instead the revolutionary ideas, theory, and practice passed down to us through history. We proudly walk in the footsteps of revolutionaries who fought and died for the harsh and priceless lessons of people's war. We must study our true revolutionary history and honor the revolutionaries of Russia, China, Peru, India, and the Philippines. We must find the same courage indigenous people all over the world have used to fight colonialists invading their lands and celebrate the battles of the Black Nation against kidnappers, slavers, racist cops, and the KKK.

We must make information pamphlets, posters, and fliers which can be spread widely both in the streets and online, uniting all who can be united in opposition to the reformist and defeatist ideas, mobilizing the masses in the interest of ending capitalism. We must build the people's understanding of revolution!

Building real power

Revolution starts by training and preparing for community self-defense, as well as building organizations that can lead the people in taking the offensive against the fascist movement and the capitalist system that breeds it.

The ruling class smugly observes how we escape the harsh realities of our society with television, drugs, and alcohol. They tsk at our mental illnesses, dependence on unhealthy foods, and how we are too exhausted at the end of our work day to do anything but veg on the couch. They believe we are too sedated and weak to ever be a real threat. But they do not know that for us, the hope of revolution gives unexpected motivation and energy.

We are absolutely capable of finding ways to make our bodies and minds stronger. We seek the camaraderie and support that comes from fighting side by side with comrades. We carve out the time to exercise and train in martial arts. We see our pride, self-worth, and ability to fight depression, anxiety, and addiction increase as hope returns to us. With the strength and determination to organize and get stronger, we will take control of our communities, kicking abusers and reactionaries to the curb. As we grow in strength and numbers, we will be able to force out homophobic and transphobic businesses like the megachurch Celebration Church.

Preparing for revolutionary war

Right now, however, we as a community are completely unorganized and unprepared for the impending violent struggle and repression that is arriving with the fascist movement. The state of the left in the United States is extremely disorganized, weak, and largely toothless, while fascist organizations like Patriot Front and Vanguard America are well-trained in military tactics and violence. White nationalists and neo-Nazis are eagerly joining the ranks of U.S. military and law enforcement.

The most important task of leftists today is answering the question of how to organize ourselves to defend the people from fascist violence, and then how to organize for the destruction of capitalism entirely. We start by calling for unified action by the people to express their real concerns and assert their power in the form of rebellion and revolution. We are not armchair revolutionaries — we plan to answer the question of "how" through struggle, practice, failure, and success in the streets.

Representation is not liberation

When we channel our hopes for change into greater representation within our same violent system, we are not only fooling ourselves but are dragging the people backwards as well. Participation in the charade that is U.S. elections does nothing for the masses, but everything for the ruling class, by continuing to give legitimacy to their system. We have zero interest in offering even the most marginal amount of legitimacy to something as illegitimate as the U.S. elections, we refuse to participate in this joke that is nothing more than the rich capitalists pretending that we have a choice in their system. Right now, more than anything, the people need revolutionary ideology, training and preparation for community self-defense, and organizations that can lead the people in taking the offensive against the fascist movement and the capitalist system that breeds it.

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