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MARXISM 2023 **SOAS University, London WC1H 0XG**
Hosted by the Socialist Workers Party

Marxism 2023 is a festival of socialist ideas taking place from Thursday 29 June to Sunday 2 July at SOAS University, London. It brings together meetings, speakers, debates, live music, a culture tent, film screenings, and more. Speakers include: **Noam Chomsky**, veteran author and philosopher • **David Harvey**, Marxist author, economist and geographer • **Michael Roberts**, Marxist economist and blogger • **Alex Callinicos**, Marxist author and writer • **Nadia Sayed**, Anti-racist activist • **Sukhdev Reel**, Justice campaigner • **Chris Smalls**, President of the Amazon Labor Union in the US • **Muzan Alneel**, Sudanese writer and revolutionary • **Anne Alexander**, Author and editor of *Middle East Solidarity* • **Ian Angus**, Author and editor at *Climate & Capitalism* • **Judith Orr**, Author of *Abortion Wars* and *Marxism & Women's Liberation* • **Laura Miles**, Author of *Transgender Resistance* • **Richard Boyd Barrett**, Socialist TD in the Irish parliament • **Christine Buchholz**, German socialist, ex-MP and anti-fascist activist; • delegations of **Striking Workers**, and more including award-winning saxophonist **Soweto Kinch**, filmmaker **Ken Loach**, journalist and author **Gary Younge**, and **Jeremy Corbyn** MP in the culture tent. Get tickets for in-person or attendance on-line over Zoom: <https://socialistworker.co.uk/marxismfestival>

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June 2023
 #11
 suggested price \$1.00

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Drag Queens, Trans Folks, and the Right's War on Gender

Pride month has a different tone this year compared with years past. The attacks on trans people have become so acute that the Human Rights Campaign, the largest LGBTQ+ organization in the country, recently declared a "state of emergency" — something it has never done before. From New York to California, a shocking number of Pride flags have been vandalized this year. We can expect the crisis to continue as we get closer to next year's election, as both Trump and DeSantis have made it clear that transphobia is going to be a rallying point for the Republicans.

I live in a relatively liberal area of LA and earlier this month my local school board in Glendale held its regular annual meeting to recommit to their Pride curriculum. Transphobes, the Proud Boys, and other right-wing forces orchestrated a protest against the vote. The crowd included local parents, but the group was largely made up of people who neither live in the area nor have children at schools in the district. They are essentially professional transphobes who tour around disrupting LGBTQ+ events and initiatives.

There was a lively counterprotest supporting the vote, and lots of parents and community groups have now popped up to defend the curriculum, which is encouraging. The neighborhood is about a third Armenian and some conservative families in this community are a potential audience

for arguments that claim being transphobic is a way to protect children. Hearteningly, Armenian LGBTQ+ people and organizations in Glendale are fighting these ideas inside their community and pushing back against the right's misinformation.

Nationally, Target pulled their Pride month clothing line in some parts of the country because the right were not only threatening to boycott the store, but were physically threaten-

ing Target workers as well. Around the country drag storytimes are being disrupted and protested by the right — this has even spread to New York, where some of the counterprotests/story hour defenses have been led by United Against Racism and Fascism, a group that some Marx21 members helped found.

There are many transphobic prop-

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The end of Title 42 and a New Era of Immigration Restrictions

Victor Fernandez, June 7th

TITLE 42, the pandemic-era regulation that allowed for both the denial of entry to asylum seekers into the US, and their expedited removal, ended on May 11. In the run-up to the deadline, the Biden administration announced that it would be sending 1,500 troops to the border. This is in part a response to the fear mongering by the Republicans, who paint a picture of a massive wave of immigrants coming into the US as a response to the end of Title 42 — in fact several Republican states sued the Biden administration for trying to end Title 42 earlier. They intend to use the issue as a political football in next year's election.

By sending troops to the border, the Biden administration has played into the Republicans' hands. It validated the false fears that the right wants to instill among regular people. Such fears are used to excuse the absolutely horrible effects of Title 42, which has led to a humanitarian crisis on the border with thousands of asylum seekers left destitute in Mexican border cities, family separations, and inhumane detentions. The Biden administration has warned that people crossing into the country now will be presumed ineligible for asylum and subject to deportation, or even jail time.

Republicans, like Florida Governor and presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis, are using this fear and xenophobia to push anti-immigrant legislation — including pushing E-Verify on employers with 25 workers or less, not allowing undocumented people to use out of state driver's licenses, and increasing the penalties for various crimes associated with being undocumented. This is an open attack against immigrants. In the

wake of the passing of this legislation, viral videos are showing up on social media of empty restaurants and abandoned workplaces. These scenes, reminiscent of the passing of AB1070 in Arizona first voted into law in 2010, are being used by the right to suggest they are doing the job the Democrats are "unwilling" to do. But it also presents them with a problem. Florida GOP representative Rick Roth, who supported DeSantis' state-wide anti-immigrant SB1718, now admits it "has a lot of negative consequences" in that tourism, construction and agricultural businesses can't find workers as frightened immigrants are leaving the state. Yet, he still claims it is positive that it keeps the undocumented from moving to Florida, and suggests the Democrats are soft on immigration.

Such a narrative hides the reality of the situation. While the right is definitely anti-immigrant and uses any opportunity to whip up racism and xenophobia for political gain, the Democrats and the Biden administration are not at all pro-immigration. Quite the contrary. Biden has overseen the formal institutionalization of a new level of enforcement aimed at permanently limiting the access of asylum seekers into the United States. This is something the Trump administration was unable to do because of strong pushback from liberal groups. But now that it is Biden policy, many nonprofits are turning a blind eye.

When the Biden administration first announced its immigration plans at the start of this year, the U.N. Human Rights Chief warned that they appeared to violate international agreements, reiterating that, "The right to seek asylum is a human right, no matter a person's origin.... nor

how they arrived at an international border." The National Immigrant Justice Center stated that the proposed new rule "violates U.S. obligations" to people fleeing persecution under US and International Rights law, and that it "will result in harm and death to people who need protection and must flee their homes quickly." **Economic Migration and Political Asylum: A False Distinction**

It is important to realize that asylum law historically allowed anyone seeking asylum to enter the US and surrender to authorities either at a port of entry or after entering the country. An asylum seeker was allowed to temporarily reside in the county while their asylum case went through the courts. Like many other examples of racist laws in this country, this law was mainly enforced only to the benefit of certain nationalities when it suited US geopolitical interests. Central Americans seeking asylum as a result of US imperial meddling in their countries, were seen as economic refugees, not political asylum seekers deserving of refugee status.

The migrant caravans under Trump pushed the contradiction of a beneficial law and its asymmetrical enforcement to a breaking point. As a result, the Trump administration enacted the "Remain in Mexico" policy, which barred asylum seekers from entering the US while their asylum cases were being heard. Trump then doubled down with Title 42, which also barred entry of asylum seekers into the US and allowed for their expedited removal if they were caught in an unauthorized entry.

After winning the election, the Biden administration made no effort to dismantle the Remain in Mexico policy or Title 42, and as we wrote in

(continued from page 6) movement of fascists committing transphobic violence. Although the Glendale school board meeting had a Proud Boys presence, it was thankfully a handful of well-known members who did not appear to be recruiting layers of new people in the area. But we can't afford to be complacent. By the end of 2022, anti-LGBTQ+ demonstrations nationally had doubled since 2021 and participation in them from far-right groups like the Proud Boys or other militias more than tripled.

The stronger the more mainstream right wing transphobic movement becomes, the bigger platform they give the fascists. The fascists can use this opening Republicans have made to say: "look, we all agree that trans people are dangerous in bathrooms and sports and schools, let's go protest that. And, here's what I have to say about how a cabal of Jews controls the world as well." For the fascists, what starts out now as "I'm protecting girls in sports" then becomes "I'm bringing a gun to drag storytime, and the school teaching Black history, and the immigrant neighborhood, and the synagogue."

Normally these ideas are confined to the fringes of society, but they come out of the woodwork when two conditions are met: the mainstream gives them an opening and there is a polarizing crisis in society. We live in a very unstable time wracked with economic crisis, war, disease, and climate catastrophe looming. Fascism feeds off this kind of misery as people look around for answers. It remains to be seen whether the far-right will have the monopoly on answering those questions or if our side will.

Resistance

There have been high profile protests to defend drag storytime and there are many debates about tactics similar to those in the antifascist movement more generally — how secretive should the movement be for safety reasons vs. how much should it try to bring other people in? While security measures are important when dealing with people as dangerous as fascists, our best weapon against them is strength in numbers, which requires open meetings and welcoming new people into the movement.

Encouragingly, there have been student walkouts at schools over transphobia — and not only in big cities. This year students have walked out in Arkansas, Virginia, Nebraska, and more. While the transphobia feels as though it is becoming more generalized across the country, the resistance is as well. Those kinds of actions need to continue and grow, and everyone needs to show up wherever there are counter-demonstrations.

Because this is such a live issue in schools, a central site of resistance is in teachers unions. They can step forward and set a standard that transphobia is union business, it is a working class issue. Comrades in our sibling group in Australia helped lead an inspiring campaign not in schools but in higher education, they fought for dedicated paid leave for gender affirming care enshrined in their union contract — which they won! This is a model worth looking at that not only works to protect trans students, but also trans people as working people.

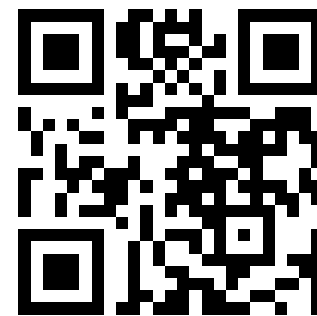
In American schools, education unions passed pro-trans resolutions

five or more years ago when the bathroom bans were the bigger issue. They created trans-affirming toolkits for teachers and they fought to protect teachers' rights not to out trans and non-binary students to their parents non-consensually. UTLA, the quite left-wing teachers union in LA, put out a statement condemning what happened in Glendale earlier this month. But we are yet to see a groundswell from teachers unions responding to the most recent attacks. Individual teachers report that this heightened climate of transphobia has renewed conversations around the issue, particularly because there is now a California court case claiming that teachers have a first amendment right to out trans and non-binary kids to their parents — which would roll back a hard-fought policy.

If we can draw together pro-trans labor initiatives, emerging parent and student advocacy, and community counterprotests that outnumber the transphobes, our side will have a fighting chance at beating back the fascists and the mainstream right that feeds them. In that process we can look to a world where our gains are not temporary, and that allows us all to explore and live out the fullest range of genders and sexualities possible.

This article was adapted from a talk by Clare Fester at a June 8th Marx21 branch meeting. Clare talked along with Alex Adams, a Canadian trans activist and socialist in our sibling organization, the International Socialists. For an audio recording of the full meeting, and further links, see our website: <https://marx21.us.org/2023/06/15>

Further Reading:



Queer and Gendered Oppression: Its Origins and its Abolition
Amidst a backlash against hard-won but partial victories for LGBTQ+ people, this pamphlet by Neelke T. based on talks she gave for Marx21US, addresses the origins of women's and LGBTQ+ oppression and what that means for liberation today.

Women have been oppressed for centuries and even, in many societies, for millennia. As such, unlike the relatively young phenomenon of racism, we can't blame gendered oppression solely on capitalism. Women's oppression under the current system may look different than in previous societies, but how did they come to be oppressed in the first place? And what do trans and queer people have to do with that?
If you ask a radical feminist what's behind it all—and that's "radical" as in "attacking the root", not as in extreme left—the answer would likely start and end with the Patriarchy, meaning in this context an issue, largely unchanging, monolithic, male/masculine need to dominate and oppress, especially when it comes to women. Were things truly this rigid, women's best bet might just actually be to join the lesbian separatists in completely removing themselves from male society. Whether or not trans women would be allowed to join them would depend on just how far the radical feminists in question take the "unchanging" part of the analysis. The non-exclusionary radical feminists might give trans women a pass: they're recognizing their maleness and removing that many transwomen, so that's something? Or maybe trans women really were just born with female brains in otherwise male-ish bodies, so they're good anyway? The trans-exclusionary radical feminists, or TERFs, however, as the term implies, would give us such benefits of the doubt: Male is Male, they say, and since those assigned male at birth can't escape that, they must therefore be trying to gain entry to women's spaces for nefarious purposes. Never mind that transmen under capitalism in hand, and if all trans folks really wanted was just to assault women, they'd skip assaulting and take the far simpler route of joining the police.

STOP THE HATE
The far-right and trans rights

Alex Adams



Drag, Trans, and the Right's War on Gender

(continued from page 1)

aganda campaigns, protests, laws, and violent events happening around the country, but these few examples are important for two reasons: they tell us that the transphobia is not only isolated in right wing enclaves in red states, it is happening more broadly. Even if it is a small minority showing up in New York and LA and they don't represent a mass movement at this time, this is not an issue that can be ignored in blue states. Second, the attacks on the Target Pride product line and things like drag storytime in public libraries or Pride content in schools is not only a single-issue attack on trans people (which would be bad enough), it is an attack on LGBTQ+ rights in general. The right was calling to remove all the Pride items from the store and the curriculum. For them transphobia is a wedge they can use to open the door for a wider attack.

The making of the conservative transphobic movement

After same-sex marriage was won in 2015 the right went looking for a new issue to re-energize its base, both in terms of votes and donors. They started with a handful of attempts at bathroom bans—in 2016 North Carolina famously introduced the first transphobic bathroom bill, which in the end backfired. The legislation garnered a backlash not just from the left but more broadly, with many celebrities and corporations making a public fuss about it. They had to rescind the bill.

Conservatives went back to the drawing board again. They polled people to see if and how transphobia could be used as an effective mobilizing tool, hoping to avoid the pitfalls of the bathroom bill. The polling found it was significantly more popular to attack trans girls in sports, especially if framed around boys competing in girls' spaces. Much contemporary transphobia is integrated with paternalistic ideas about protecting women and children — as if the right cares about that in any other context! The hypocrisy is obvious whenever there is a mass shooting — the right is silent about children being murdered, yet they are vocal about trans kids.

In 2020 Nebraska became the first state to ban trans girls participating in women's sports. This is the same reason the issue has become such a flashpoint in public libraries and schools: the transphobia is primarily concentrated around children. Most moral panics have an element of this, with overtures at protecting young, impressionable people from perceived deviant, society-destroying practices. In fact, today's transphobia shares many features with an earlier period of homophobia, including false ideas about the grooming and sexualization of children, or ideas about queer people trying to "recruit" school-age children.

The transphobic movement amped up even more when Trump lost the election. With the Democrats back in charge of the House, the right grew yet more defensive. Since then at least 20 Republican states have passed laws attacking medical care, sports teams, drag storytimes, and how gender may be discussed in schools. In 2021 Arkansas passed the first law preventing access to gender affirming care for minors. More than 150 bills to restrict trans people in some way were filed in state legislatures last year, the highest number ever in American history.

The legislative attacks are horrifying both because they have real, measurable effects in terms of accessing care and resources, and for the exclusion and stigma they entrench. The Trevor Project did a survey last year that found more than half of trans young people in the country had seriously considered suicide.

What is striking about this creation of a transphobic voting and donating bloc is its cynicism. Although its architects are already sexist and homophobic, this coordinated attack is not primarily rooted in deeply held or felt popular ideas about gender — which could be argued with on scientific grounds about the diversity of biology and the falsity of binaries. These conservative politicians will attach themselves to any hateful persecution of a vulnerable group, even if that issue is not central for them, if they think there is capacity to cultivate a movement of

votes and donors that can benefit them. They are now contributing to and being pulled rightwards by a visible far-right.

Far-right and fascist transphobia

The mainstream right's creation of this transphobic base is becoming increasingly dangerous not only due to what is being handed down in state legislatures, but because it is now manifesting as more serious intimidation and violence in the streets that is led by more extreme elements — including fascists.

Socialists understand that capitalism regulates and controls gender. This is rooted in forcing one gender to do all the unpaid domestic and care-related labor. Everything that falls outside the gender binary—like queerness or transness—has to be policed in order to keep the system running. Sexism and homophobia have evolved in different ways over time and struggle from below has won many concessions. While still relying on sexism, large portions of the ruling class were happy to placate the women's movement with legal abortion, while simultaneously making it difficult for poor women and women of color to access. Similarly, as popular attitudes changed, the establishment was willing to accept same-sex marriage to appease activists and integrate a layer of middle-class gay people into capitalist normality.

But these changes were never accepted by a far-right minority. For them, transphobia is a tool to recruit to a much bigger project. Fascist ideology is based on extreme and naturalized ideas of hierarchy. To grow up with a clear and unequal gender dynamic underlies their entire mythological belief system justifying inequality and oppression. Indeed, the fascist focus on gender has precedent. Many of the books burned in Nazi Germany came from the library of Magnus Hirschfeld, the Jewish sexologist whose Institute of Sexual Studies was the first clinic in the world to provide gender affirming surgeries.

Today there isn't a mass street
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March 2021, was "running that very deportation and detention machine himself." The Remain in Mexico policy was removed by the courts, not Biden. Title 42 has remained in place up until the formal "end" of the pandemic announced this year, when it had no legal grounds to continue. It was widely opposed by public health experts from the start.

New Rules, Same Policy

Now that Title 42 is gone, the Biden administration has announced a new regulation for asylum seekers that would bar their entry into the US if they passed through a third country and did not seek asylum in that country first. This is a policy directed at asylum seekers coming in from the southern border. Similar policies used all over the world by the EU, Australia, and others to allow developed countries to shirk their humanitarian responsibilities and displace refugees in poorer countries permanently. Under Biden, this policy essentially de-facto preserves Remain in Mexico. Already the Mexican government has stopped issuing safe passage permits, are stopping refugees at checkpoints, and dispersing them around the country (away from the US border) with uncertain futures. This is how third-country processing works.

During the election Biden promised to "modernize" the immigration system. What this means today is that anyone seeking asylum now has to use the CBPOne app — a horribly designed piece of software that adds an extra layer of complexity and difficulty in the process of obtaining asylum.

In the meanwhile, the Biden administration has opened up pathways from certain countries such as Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, and Nicaragua for a limited number of asylum seekers to enter the US. However, those seeking asylum must do so from their country of origin, go through a rigorous application process, and have a US sponsor. This, of course, could only be achieved by asylum seekers who have the means to do so. Most refugees simply cannot jump these hurdles.

Codified Hypocrisy

What the Biden administration has done is codify into law the hypocrisy of the original asylum laws' enforcement. It has created pathways for a small number of asylum seekers to enter the country, while the majority of people who desperately need asylum are forced to jump through an insurmountable number of obstacles and are eventually denied entry. This mirrors the regular non-asylum immigration system, where wealth and influence is given easy access while labor is denied entry, forcing people into the ranks of the undocumented. Asylum seekers caught in the US are also slated for expedited removal and banned from the US for five years, therefore adding to their vulnerability for massive exploitation.

Immigration and the Right Wing

Going into the 2024 election cycle, the narrative around immigration will be one of the right wing pushing enforcement while Biden picks up pro-immigrant votes he doesn't deserve. In fact Republican House member from Ohio Jim Jordan (a Trump ally and anti-immigration bigot), offered qualified support for Biden's new policy early on while continuing to push for more. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (an anti-immigrant group dubbed a Hate Group by Southern Poverty Law Center) praised the plan as a "good first step."

Nevertheless, Biden is still being accused of being "soft on the border" by Republicans. Some on the far-right (like Jim Jordan, Paul Gosar of Arizona, and Lauren Boebert of Colorado) are even mirroring the fascist great-replacement theories, accusing Biden of intentionally creating a border crisis and inviting an "invasion" across the US-Mexico border with the intention of "changing our culture." This may make Biden look moderate by comparison, but pushes him even further to his right. Without a larger, vocal and more militant movement criticizing Biden's policies from the perspective of immigrant rights, he is only providing a more stable version of Trump's poli-

cies that are more likely to survive challenges in the courts.

Fight for Change and Against Borders

Unfortunately, many on the left and in liberal circles will stay quiet about Biden's increased anti-immigrant policies. And even those who have criticized aspects, from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to the ACLU, are not using their position to mobilize immigrant communities and their supporters into action. However, election years give the pro-immigrant left an opening to force real change in the immigration system. When the Dreamers sat in at Obama's office during his reelection campaign, Obama had no choice but to do something positive for immigrants, and that's how DACA was born.

We must not be afraid of taking Democrats to task for their policies and demand to remove any impediment from allowing asylum seekers entry into this country. It is our duty to also fight for the rights of the millions of immigrants living here already regardless of how they got here and their immigration status. We must build a movement and struggle against the anti-immigrant forces of the Republican and Democratic parties.

This issue is only going to become more important. We already face migration due to disruption from changing climate—which the US has contributed disproportionately to. Global warming will increase the needs of masses of people to move within and over borders in coming years. The only path to climate justice is to welcome them. We need to work now to create a future policy and a future world where they will be able to find safety, and not be left to burn.

We must also broaden our demands to allow all people the right to move anywhere in the world, for any reason, to seek a better life for themselves and their families.

Wildfire Smoke reveals Climate Crisis

As smoke from Canadian blazes spread, it was just the latest sign that capitalism's addiction to fossil fuels is driving humanity to disaster

As this story went to press, fires are still burning across Canada. Early in the fire season about 5.4 million hectares—13.3 million acres—have already burned. This is over 15 times the ten-year annual average—fueled by dry forests and increased heat and storms, all linked to climate change.

Here in New York City, the dangerous, orange-gray haze which blotted out the sun has lifted—for now. But smoke is still enveloping parts of Canada and the US, bringing home the fact of accelerating climate chaos.

At one point, over 15 million people were under extreme air quality warnings. The Air Quality Index, which runs from 0 to 500, reached local records of 407 in New York City, and 429 in Philadelphia, both “hazardous.”

View from New York

By June 8th, an exceptionally bad spell of pollution had stalled over New York City for three days.

Broadway plays and outdoor baseball games were shut down as people found it hard to breathe. Many were sent to the hospital with respiratory symptoms.

Yet our Democratic Mayor and Governor didn't even call a press conference on the subject until 12 hours after hazardous levels were reached, and then acted as if there was nothing they could do.

During the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic, NYC leaders dismissed guidance to improve ventilation in buildings and replace filters and fans. The poorest have again been hit the hardest by this lack as people were told to stay home because of smoke.

“The city is putting out advisories,” said Elizabeth Yeampierre from UPROSE, an environmental organization in the Hispanic neigh-

borhood of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, “the city's got to give out air conditioners and purifiers.” City officials seemed to forget even how to distribute N95 masks.

Workers Action

In some areas of New York it was workers who took action.

NYC Teamsters Local 804, with help from DSA members, purchased and distributed N95 masks to choking drivers ignored by their managers at UPS. Such actions contributed to the mood for strike there.

In Queens, *Los Deliveristas Unidos*, a union with very limited resources, gave out masks to the largely immigrant workforce who deliver food on bicycles and scooters.

Workers at the Trader Joe's Essex Crossing store in downtown New York walked out June 7th, protesting unsafe working conditions. Their union said, “Air quality in the store is so poor right now that crews are having trouble breathing.”

The union recently won by workers at REI campaign and outdoor clothing stores tweeted, “Update from the smoggy streets of SoHo, NYC: today, our union successfully pressured management to close our store due to the increasingly unsafe air quality in Manhattan.”

These and other examples of action can be used to strengthen nascent rank and file networks, and help get unions involved in the broader climate struggle.

An International Inferno

Last year, the United Nations warned of a “global wildfire crisis,” with drought and heat from climate change increasing risks.

Canada was the center of a high-temperature anomaly in May, contributing to fires in the western provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, which is facing its second-biggest wildfire on record.

Unusually, some of the worst fires were in the eastern province of Quebec, where more than 11,000 people had to evacuate their homes.

While the American wildfires were given international coverage, there was much less notice of the raging forest fires in northern Thailand this March that sent nearly 2 million people to hospitals with respiratory illnesses.

Capitalism

This is what capitalism offers—a burning world, war, poverty, pandemics and racism.

In the US, oil companies successfully pushed to have wildfire smoke excluded from the Clean Air Act compliance data used by states, calling them “exceptional events.”

As the socialist ecologist Ian Rapel writes on wildfires, “These traumatic events do take on the appearance of ‘wild’, uncontrollable firestorms—the blaze unleashed—but it is a mistake to assign all such events to nature's untrammelled forces. As with patterns of biodiversity and living nature, elemental fire does not act in isolation from humanity's dominant capitalist social relations.”

It is this system which “enhanced the conditions needed to create these vast and devastating fires.” Whether sparked by power lines and braking trains, or lightning (increased in hot, dry weather) “it is in fact capitalism that generates these wildfires through its own accelerant mix of fuel and flame that fans that potent blend with its climatic chaos.”

The effects of the environmental emergency are not a threat in the far future. They are happening now.

We must use these events to help push people from isolated worry about the future to taking on the system causing catastrophe today.

As attention turns towards the elections, where next for the left?

As media focus on Trump and DeSantis, Sophie Squire and Marie Edwards argue it is wrong to be dragged behind Biden.

Once again, we may be stuck between a far right figurehead (Trump), and an imperialist warmonger (Biden) backed by the bosses. But the argument goes, as it always does, that we have to back Biden as he's the only option to beating Trump, the Republican Party and the growing far right. And that's exactly the message Biden wants you to hear.

It is certainly true that another term for Trump or another racist Republican would give real confidence to the far right. But another four years of Biden won't be a victory either. His record speaks for itself: he promised trillions of dollars of investment in infrastructure, yet just a fraction of the initial sum has gone into projects to help improve people's lives.

And despite his claims to be the most pro-union president in history, Biden pushed through a bill to stop railway workers' striking last year. Biden has also thrown his support behind new fossil fuel projects like the Willow oil -drilling project in Alaska. He has reneged on his student loan forgiveness program in his deal over the debt ceiling, which would end the pause on loan repayments. And he has maintained his commitment to war and imperialism. The US is the biggest -financier of the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, having sent £60 billion in military support and arms. Biden's government has been the hardest driving force in NATO to continue the fighting so it can get to its real enemy, China.

In fact, with an approval rating hovering around 40%, it is certainly not inevitable that Biden can defeat the right.

The anger over the repeal of Roe v Wade helped prevent major losses for the Democrats during the midterms, but virtually nothing has been done since then. And Biden's failure in general to improve the lives of ordinary people has opened the door to the Republicans.

The obedient backing of Biden's re-election by more left-wing members of the Democrats and figures like Sanders shows they are still beholden to the party machine. That can be seen most clearly when it comes to “the squad.” Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib, provided a more radical voice in Congress.

Unfortunately, they have been under pressure to toe the party line even when it betrays their left-wing credentials and the hopes of those who threw themselves

into the Democrats to back Biden. AOC reported being intimidated into voting to increase funding to Israel's Iron Dome defense system. AOC, Omar and Pressley also voted to prevent the rail workers' strike last year. This shows the true nature of options available for left-wingers in the Democratic Party.

The DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) continue to play a role in pushing for getting “progressive” candidates elected because, they argue, whatever its limitations, the Democratic party is a fruitful place to organize. For years, thousands of activists have put uncountable numbers of hours into -campaigning to get left wing Democratic candidates into power. However, this time could have been better spent building workplace struggle, street movements or even an alternative party. Instead this enthusiasm and energy has been funneled into a capitalist party that will always be a dead end. It is for this very reason that the Democrats are known as “the graveyard of movements.”

The rage and bitterness in US society has steadily grown in recent years. The Black Lives Matter movement, as well as an increase in strikes and workplace struggle, has shown this. The left has to focus on these fights, not Biden and the Democrats.

Cornel West, longtime activist and social critic, announced his candidacy for president last week. His move from the small left-populist “People's Party” to the Greens was a step in the right direction. If, despite the pressures, he can run a campaign bringing together a range of working class and progressive activists outside of the Democratic Party, it should be supported by socialists.

But we should be wary of replacing one electoral focus with another. If the current contract campaign by the UPS Teamsters, for example, result in a strike, it would be a more important focus for raising class politics, workers' power, and building solidarity.

West himself said you “have to be part of a movement” to dismantle an empire. It is only when masses of people move independently into activity for themselves that they can begin to build a real alternative to the system. Such mass activity might profitably create an electoral expression. But (as the collapse of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain shows us) it must avoid being side-tracked into relying on representatives in order to fulfill the promise that another world is possible.