

Why Socialists Must Work to Defeat Trump and Elect Biden or Candidate X

July 6, 2024



I am a member of Solidarity: A Socialist, Feminist, Anti-Racist Organization. A month ago, we had a debate in Solidarity on the question of the U.S. presidential election in which I argued the need to vote for Biden in order to defeat Trump. I was asked to provide a written version of my presentation, I had no notes from that talk and so wrote up the following text which presents the fundamental position that I took then, but with an update.

Since that time, two events—Biden’s disastrous performance in the first presidential debate of 2024 and the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that grants U.S. presidents greater presidential immunity—have intervened. These events strengthen my belief that we stand on the threshold of a period of authoritarianism, the anteroom to fascism, so that more than before we must vote for Biden or his replacement, especially in swing states. We must vote for Biden or candidate X to prevent the increasingly rapid slide toward authoritarianism, the loss of our democratic institutions such as they are, and end to our civil rights.

Let me say that I remain, like virtually every member of Solidarity, committed to the idea that we must create an independent working-class political party with a socialist program — though as we know from the experiences of the Labor Party (of the 1990s), now defunct, and the Green Party, the political rules of the game make it extremely difficult to do so. I do not believe, as DSA does, that the left should have a strategic orientation to the Democratic Party, because I believe that decades of attempts to reform or realign that party have failed and there is little likelihood of success in the future. Nevertheless, because of the threat of Trump, I believe today, as I argued back in 2020, that we must back Biden, or if he steps down, the Democratic Party candidate who replaces him.

I am well aware of Biden’s appalling role in supporting Israel’s genocide and of his adoption of border policies much like Trump’s. I also know his terrible history in the U.S. Congress, especially in supporting the reactionary policies of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Yet, even with all of that, he is far less dangerous than Donald Trump who now threatens to end our democracy, such as it is.

We are all well aware of Donald Trump’s character and his psychology. He is a selfish narcissist. He

succeeded through his reality show “The Apprentice” in making himself first a household name and then a national, charismatic figure. He has a brilliant ability to read his ever-expanding base of followers and to make himself beloved by them. He holds misogynistic, racist, and xenophobic views and he has projected them toward and normalized them in American society. He has used fear to speak to the insecurity of white people and to evoke latent attitudes and feelings of resentment toward women, LGBTQ people, Blacks, and Latinos, or if they were not already present, he has instilled them. In this way he has built up a mass following among tens of millions, maybe half of the American people. While not easy to measure, Trump has the backing of a large percentage of white working-class voters, including many unions members.

Over the last eight years, Trump’s personal political views have come to coincide with the ideology of white Christian nationalism. He has strong support from the white Evangelical churches and their largely working-class congregations. His allied rightist organizations, such as Miller’s America First Legal, Kirk’s Turning Point USA, and Michael Flynn’s America’s Future have received millions of dollars from the Bradley Impact Fund. He has won the backing of far-right militias and extreme rightwing groups such as the Oath Keepers and the Proud boys. Most important, he has completely taken over the Republican Party, given it greater discipline, and moved it to the right. He, from above, has been constructing a far-right political movement and party that is extremely dangerous.

We also learned between 2016 and 2020 how Trump would govern. When elected then, he did not yet have a political team and had only moderate influence in the Republican Party. Yet he carried out some of the most significant attacks on American democracy and on the working class in decades. First, in 2017 he passed a \$2.3 trillion tax cut that dramatically affected the distribution of wealth in the country. Second, he appointed three rightwing justices—Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett—to the U.S. Supreme Court, who then overturned *Roe v. Wade*, ending federal protection of abortion rights. And he pulled the United States out of the Paris Climate Accords. There were also many other attacks on the social programs and federal regulations that benefitted the American people. We should not forget that he was also responsible for hundreds of thousands of unnecessary deaths during the COVID pandemic because he failed to follow the science, encouraging people to ignore and resist proper health practices such as masking and avoiding crowds. In 2020, he denied that he lost the election and worked to subvert the counting of the votes and the certification of Biden, and on January 6, 2021, he organized an insurrection and attempted coup to install himself in power.

Upon taking office in 2025, Trump and his advisors plan to substantially remake the U.S. government, a plan made easier now by the U.S. Supreme Court. Coming into office this time, he will now have a detailed plan called *Project 2025* and a dedicated and loyal team of advisors and officials to carry out his wishes. As *The Guardian* newspaper summarized what’s coming:

The Project 2025 document makes recommendations across four broad fronts: restoring the family as the centrepiece of American life; dismantling the administrative state; defending the nation’s sovereignty and borders; and securing “God-given” individual rights to live freely. That would translate into a fresh crackdown on reproductive freedom and draconian immigration laws—including even religious tests—within the first six months of a Trump presidency.

The *New York Times* and other publications have laid out the plans published by the Heritage Foundation and other advisors in great detail, but these are the some of the main points.

- He will reorganize the Justice Department so that he can use it to wreak vengeance on his

political opponents.

- He will organize round-ups of millions of immigrants, confining them in concentration camps, and then carry out mass deportations. He also plans to end birthright citizenship.
- Trump has proposed a new 10 percent universal tariff on all imports and a 60 percent tariff on all imports from China. This would disrupt world trade, raise the costs of goods on American consumers, and increase inflation. One could see it as a combination of tax increases and wage cuts.
- Trump has said that he would dispatch U.S. troops to fight drug cartels in Mexico.
- Trump has tacitly agreed with Vladimir Putin on many issues and has not expressed support for Ukraine, so he might press for negotiations and “peace” with a treaty that divides Ukraine, giving Crimea to Russia and the provinces it claims—Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia—that is 25 percent of Ukraine’s national territory.
- He says that he will use U.S. troops in the United States, for example in the case of widespread protests such as Black Lives Matter.
- He would end the civil service in Federal jobs, replacing civil servants with political appointees.

We can imagine what will happen to the Bill of Rights, that is freedom of speech and the press, to assemble and protest, habeas corpus and the rest.

Now with the Supreme Court decision on presidential immunity, if elected president, Trump will be even more dangerous. As Justice Sonia Sotomayor put it so eloquently and passionately in her dissent:

Today’s decision to grant former Presidents criminal immunity reshapes the institution of the Presidency. It makes a mockery of the principle, foundational to our Constitution and system of Government, that no man is above the law... The President of the United States is the most powerful person in the country, and possibly the world... When he uses his official powers in any way, under the majority’s reasoning, he now will be insulated from criminal prosecution... Orders the Navy’s Seal Team 6 to assassinate a political rival? Immune. Organizes a military coup to hold onto power? Immune. Takes a bribe in exchange for a pardon? Immune. Immune, immune, immune.

Let the President violate the law, let him exploit the trappings of his office for personal gain, let him use his official power for evil ends. Because if he knew that he may one day face liability for breaking the law, he might not be as bold and fearless as we would like him to be. That is the majority’s message today.

Even if these nightmare scenarios never play out, and I pray they never do, the damage has been done. The relationship between the President and the people he serves has shifted irrevocably. In every use of official power, the President is now a king above the law.

As Sotomayor makes clear, our rights as workers in our unions, as activists in the women’s, LGBTQ, Black, Latino, and immigrant rights movements, in our socialist organizing are all in danger. So, we must stop Trump.

Biden’s weak performance in the debate and reports that he is generally weaker, slower, and more confused than realized, make it clear that the Democrats should replace him with another candidate. There are intelligent proposals by influential Democrats, such as that of James Zogby, a senior

member of the Democratic National Committee to replace Biden with a more effective candidate. There have also been calls to build a movement that stretches from moderate to liberal and progressives to replace Biden with someone else. Certainly, it would be better for the Democrats, and for us socialists, if there were a younger, stronger, candidate, and perhaps even one with better politics than Biden. In any case, we socialists, in order to defend democracy and civil rights and to preserve the labor and social movements, must stop Trump.