



# Don't let this creep have his way

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## EDITORIAL

# How could this happen?

No one expected Donald Trump to become the Republican nominee, and his election victory is an even bigger shock. But the first step is to understand why it happened and face it squarely.

**A**N ENDLESS, miserable presidential campaign is over—with the most miserable result imaginable.

Several readers of *Socialist Worker* with young children commented late last night on social media that they put their kids to bed with assurances that the monster wouldn't win—and they dreaded explaining how "It" could happen. We all know how they feel.

Donald Trump's victory exposes how decrepit the U.S. political system has become after decades of two-party oligarchical rule. This is a man with ties to the racist far right, a pathological narcissist who entered the race intending to boost his media brand, and who horrifies and disgusts not just millions of working people, but a majority of the American ruling class.

And still he won the election for president of the United States. What a testimonial for the "world's greatest democracy."

It will take days and weeks to process the full implications of Donald Trump being elected the next president of the United States. No one expected Trump to win the Republican nomination, and the same is true about the presidency. For sure, his victory will upend politics in the U.S. and internationally in ways we can't predict.

There will be a lot of talk in the next weeks about how the election proves the U.S. is irretrievably right wing and backward. Trump's victory is certainly due in part to his appeals to nationalism, immigrant-bashing and Islamophobia. The far right has been emboldened by Trump's

campaign, and the left will have to figure out how to confront it.

But if we're going to succeed in that challenge and build a stronger left, we have to have some clarity about what led to this terrible result. *Socialist Worker* will try to take up these questions with all the depth they require in the coming days—but some initial conclusions are clear.

**H**AVING ABANDONED even rhetorical appeals to give confidence to the Democratic Party's more liberal base so she could chase the votes of moderates and even dyed-in-the-wool, conservatives, Clinton left the field open to Trump to claim that his reactionary program would benefit the majority of people who have seen their living standards stagnate and decline, even in the period of "recovery" from the Great Recession.

The liberal base of the Democratic Party came through for Clinton. According to exit poll data, she won 88 percent of the Black vote and 65 percent from Latinos. It was the swing voters who Clinton courted that stuck with Trump.

Trump may well end up losing the popular vote—his victory was assured by the undemocratic Electoral College, enshrined in the Constitution by slave owners, that gives outsized influence to traditionally conservative rural states.

Still, with everything we know about him after this campaign, how could so many people vote for Trump?

His promises to stand up for the "little guy" are blatant lies to camouflage an agenda that will help the 1 Percent with gigantic tax giveaways and the like. But Clinton's promise of continuing an intolerable status quo didn't sound like a real alternative to people at the end of their rope.

Bernie Sanders' left-wing campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination nearly upset Clinton by making an appeal to workers to challenge what he called the "billionaire class." Clinton, who has spent her political career ingratiating herself to that class, managed to bury Sanders' message—and rather than continue his "political revolution," Sanders abandoned his opposition to whip up support for Clinton.

Clinton and Sanders and much of the rest of the political establishment, some Republicans included, criticized Trump's ugly outrages. But because they never acknowledged the real economic grievances that he built his campaign around, they left the way clear for Trump to channel legitimate bitterness into scapegoating and scaremongering.

Even when Clinton did counter Trump's racism, woman-hating, immigrant-bashing

and Islamophobia, it rang hollow. As a personification of the insider Washington political establishment, Clinton bears responsibility—often directly—for policies that led to the mass incarceration of African American men, the sweeping deportation of immigrants and endless wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that have fueled anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bigotry.

**R**ACISM HAS been central to the Trump campaign since his speech announcing his candidacy, when he referred to Mexican immigrants as rapists. But while the open bigots of the so-called alt-right have been a notable element of Trump's supporters, racism alone can't explain why states and counties that voted for Barack Obama in both 2008 and 2012 turned away from the Democrats this time.

Some of those voters were in states that Hillary Clinton was expected to win, like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, where Trump scored points with his argument that U.S. workers lost jobs due to free trade deals and rising immigration. It was another

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**We have a lot of work to do to build a left alternative that confronts Trumpism—and that builds the kind of organization capable of turning the tide.**

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grotesque lie. But the truth—that growing economic hardship is due to rising inequality that benefits the 1 Percent—wasn't something that Hillary Clinton wanted to talk about.

The stomach-turning irony of this outcome is that Hillary Clinton and the rest of the Democratic establishment figured Trump would be their ideal opponent. He's a buffoon and too extreme to be elected, they told themselves. All Clinton would have to do to beat Trump is "appear presidential" and tout her "preparedness" and "experience."

But the Democratic Party brain trust didn't understand what happened during the eight years of the Obama presidency, when they responded to the Great Recession by bailing out the banksters while doubling down on their commitment to neoliberalism and austerity cutbacks that balanced budgets on workers' backs.

The living conditions of many millions of everyday people in the U.S. have deteriorated or stagnated. So when Trump de-



cried the loss of decent-paying jobs and accused Clinton and the Democratic Party of throwing people to the wolves, some segment of the population believed—wrongly in fact, but with a feeling of urgency—that someone understood their pain.

Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton's response to Trump's pledge to make America great again was: "But wait, America is already great."

When it came time to cast their ballots, enough people in the right states begged to differ. They decided to punish the establishment politician in favor of the outsider.

**T**HE CONVENTIONAL media wisdom was stunned by this outcome, and so there will be a scramble for simple answers to explain away Election 2016: a fundamentally conservative population; the irretrievable racism of all white workers; even the impact of the Green Party's Jill Stein, whose "crime" was to rightly insist that the greater evil can't be stopped by championing the lesser evil.

We should refuse to accept those simple answers. One of the first challenges for the left will be to explain what happened in all its complexity. But there are many more challenges to come.

As the radical left warned, in defiance of calls for moderation from liberals, the right wing has been emboldened by Trumpism and needs to be confronted. But we can't let

the people most responsible for this mess point the finger at the most reactionary bigots. Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and the Democratic Party need to answer for why they had nothing to offer as an alternative to Trump's scapegoating.

We have a lot of work to do, starting today, to build a real left alternative that recognizes the misery and suffering so many people endure; that confronts these conditions politically and practically; and that builds organization capable of turning the tide.

Large numbers of people are already horrified by Trump and will be determined to take action to show their opposition. More will be spurred to act by the inevitable outrages of an arrogant right wing that oversteps—that's a lesson from all of the right's victories in recent elections. In the end, at least some of those who voted for Trump will come to understand that they abhor what he stands for.

But for now, we need to start building that resistance from the ground up. The first step is to understand the lessons and implications of this election and face them squarely—and then we move on from there.

STATEMENT FROM  
THE INTERNATIONAL  
SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

## The election of Trump and the struggle ahead

**1.** The election of Donald Trump as president of the United States is a shocking and dangerous turn of events—not only for the U.S., but for the entire world. It is a decisive shift, representing the latest failure of center-right and center-left parties in the advanced capitalist countries in the wake of the Great Recession, opening the way for the triumph of a candidate who used right-wing populism to stoke racism, xenophobia and reaction.

Trump's electoral success on a platform of criminalizing immigrants—Muslims and Mexicans in particular—will give confidence to racist and anti-immigrant forces worldwide, such as the National Front in France, whose leader Marine Le Pen congratulated Trump and said that France would be next, and openly Nazi outfits like Greece's Golden Dawn.

Trump's contempt for women, his history as a sexual predator and his vow to restrict abortion will boost reactionaries who want to roll back the gains of the women's movement in this country and beyond.

His "America First" policy could sharpen imperialist rivalries and shake up Washington's alliances as the U.S. maneuvers to maintain global dominance. For certain, he will whip up nationalism, particularly on trade issues, and try to slam the door on the already paltry number of refugees that the U.S. government takes in.

Trump's campaign has already emboldened forces on the right in the U.S., including the far right, and his election will no doubt give them more confidence. We can also expect racist police who already kill Black people with impunity to regard Trump's victory as a green light for more of the same.

**2.** The election does not, however, represent an overwhelming turn to the right in U.S. society—and not only because Trump lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton. Instead, we see a political polarization in which both the right and left are growing.

The direction of politics in the U.S. will depend, above all, on building an activist, fighting left based on social movements, unions and popular organizations. The International Socialist Organization stands with working people and the oppressed who will bear the brunt of the assaults to come under a Trump presidency. We are wholly committed to the struggle to defend those facing the right's attacks and to the wider fight for justice.

**3.** The U.S. capitalist class and its political establishment will attempt to rein in Trump's excesses. But the Republican Party, taking note of Trump's electoral success, will no doubt also seek to normalize his politics by adapting his agenda to meet their own interests.

The U.S. capitalist class was unable to stop Trump despite overwhelming opposition within its ranks. A ruling class that stood astride the world in the mid-20th century is shot through with internal tensions, as hostile factions buy up politicians who tend to their own particular interests, with scarcely a nod to wider issues.

Without the discipline imposed by the Cold War or pressure from an organized working class, U.S. capitalists have used the neoliberal era to grab all the wealth they can, political consequences be damned. The Republicans act on that agenda openly and aggressively; the Democrats work to mediate the demands of capital with their party's working-class electoral base. Trump, recognizing that millions of people find the status quo intolerable, broke the political consensus, at least rhetorically.

Thus, the White House, once dominated by old-money ruling class figures and politicians socialized in the U.S. military, will now be occupied by a rogue billionaire. Trump, despite the comparisons some have made to the Italian fascist ruler Mussolini, more closely resembles Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian media magnate who used his money and populist appeals to impose himself on a corrupt, conservative political establishment.

**4.** Whatever sops a Trump administration may provide to workers, if any, will be tiny in comparison to the huge tax giveaways he's already vowed to enact. Corporate America will get the tax holiday it has long demanded for bringing back its overseas horde of cash, and a Republican-controlled

Congress will seize the opportunity to roll back regulations and perhaps take aim at Social Security and Medicare.

Tax "reform" under Trump, if realized, would further consolidate the greatest economic inequality that the U.S. has seen in a century. Sections of the white working class that supported Trump would see their conditions worsen as a result, probably dramatically. The same is true for the backbone of Trump's support in the economically battered white middle class, both small business owners and low-level managers.

This is a recipe for greater social and political discontent as the right wing overreaches, as it has so many times in the past.

**5.** The Trump election, based on fear and hatred, comes eight years after Barack Obama's first campaign to win the presidency, with its rhetoric of hope and change.

Taking office amid the worst economic

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crisis since the 1930s with a solid Democratic majority in both houses of Congress, Obama had the opportunity to marginalize the Republicans for a decade at least. Instead, the administration devoted itself to bailing out the banks and shrinking the relative size of the federal government, while workers were given very minimal assistance as unemployment and home foreclosures soared.

The Obama health care law, which could have produced a massively popular and badly needed government-centered program, instead entrenched the power of big insurance and pharmaceutical companies. Workers today are paying higher costs for a declining quality of health care after Obama's reform. On the political side, the opportunity for the Democrats to strengthen their electoral base with a signature achievement like universal health care was squandered. Instead, the Republicans got another stick to beat up on "big government" and the Democrats.

This and other disappointments paved the way for the Republican comeback of 2010, which handed control of state governments to the Republicans and ensured gridlock in Congress ever since, with the GOP winning control of the House and

then the Senate. Some increased taxes on the wealthy and business and greater regulation of the banks hasn't prevented Corporate America from reaping record profits, despite the weak economy.

**6.** The Democratic Party's policies—from Bill Clinton in the 1990s to Obama over the last eight years—have undercut its traditional New Deal/Great Society electoral base in the working class by shrinking the size of the federal government and eliminating federal programs for the poor and vulnerable. The decline of unions—accelerated by the pro-business policies of the Clinton and Obama administrations—has further weakened and disoriented the Democrats' traditional base in the organized working class.

Led by "New Democrats" like Bill Clinton and Al Gore, the party's strategy was to build up electoral networks through urban political machines and a superficial turn to "diversity," while promoting its pro-business policies in an attempt to take over traditional Republican bases of support in the white/suburban middle class. Trump's rise in the Republican Party encouraged this strategy within the 2016 campaign of Hillary Clinton, whose leaders believed they could supplant Republicans as the first party of U.S. capitalism.

**7.** The Democrats' role as custodians of an increasingly intolerable status quo created the opening for a rebellion within—in the form of the Bernie Sanders campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination.

By targeting the "billionaire class," Sanders—who did not shy away from his history as a socialist—showed that millions of working people were prepared to embrace a message based on workers' rights and solidarity.

But Sanders, having abandoned his lifelong political independence to run as a Democrat, ultimately endorsed Clinton before the Democratic convention last summer. From that point on, he silenced any critique of her or the party establishment, and supported her doomed campaign theme of portraying America as "still great."

**8.** With Sanders silent and Clinton angling for Republican votes, Trump seized the opportunity to speak about the working class—a rarity for presidential candidates.

Having used right-wing populism to dispatch his Republican rivals, Trump again went unchallenged in the general election campaign as he welded the economic grievances of white workers to the most reactionary traditions in U.S. politics—centrally, racism against African Americans



and immigrants.

In a country built on a foundation of slavery, genocide and imperial conquest, Trump followed the path of other right-wing populists like George Wallace. He could rely on a base of support that was generally wealthier than Clinton's and Sanders', according to exit polls. But as well, sections of the white working class—including in areas won solidly by Obama in 2008 and 2012—rejected the Democrats' defense of an intolerable status quo and went for Trump instead.

**9.** The hard right was already energized by the Trump campaign, and it will gain confidence now to push its agenda on immigration, law and order, and other issues.

One likely consequence is a further political polarization around racist policing. The militarization of law enforcement agencies that escalated under the Obama administration will no doubt intensify, with the use of repression against the Black rebellions in Ferguson and Baltimore and, more recently, the Standing Rock struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline serving as a model for cracking down.

**10.** Trump's victory in the presidential election comes despite his loss in the popular vote. The Electoral College—an archaic system designed at the founding of the U.S. to favor the slaveholding Southern states—gave Trump the edge.

The state-based character of the Electoral College meant that the great working-class population centers, such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston, played no decisive role in the 2016 campaign, since they are in states that aren't competitive between the parties.

**11.** Nevertheless, the Democratic Party's leading circles, having cynically played to rightful fear about Trump's authoritarianism and bigotry for months, are now bestowing legitimacy on the president-elect, with calls from Clinton, Obama and others to "give Trump a chance" and unite behind him for the good of the country.

This will lead to tensions with the large numbers of Democratic supporters who were drawn to the Sanders' wing of the party. Some liberal party figures may try to respond by giving greater scope for activism. But as in the past, the liberal Democrats will ultimately seek to channel such activism into efforts to renew the Democratic Party.

The early protests against Trump's election—in contrast to the conciliatory attitude of Democratic leaders—show the potential for building a stronger resistance that could, in turn, pressure trade unions and/or mainstream liberal organizations to respond and challenge the right in some fashion.

Most important of all, however, the urgent need to fight the attacks of the right wing under Trump can connect already existing social struggles and movements in a common project of resistance, around a positive agenda for working people and the oppressed. The multiple crises created or exacerbated by a Trump presidency can further radicalize a new generation that has already been drawn to Black Lives Matter, the fight against DAPL and solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux (Lakota), immigrant rights and other movements, and the left-wing campaign of Bernie Sanders.

The ISO is unreservedly committed to the fight for democracy and justice against

the reactionary agenda of Donald Trump and all those forces responsible for his victory. As part of the struggle, we will put forward the desperately needed politics of genuine hope and liberation—in contrast to the politics of despair and scapegoating on which Trump thrives—based on our commitment to achieving a socialist society in which working people control their own lives and society.

The urgent need to build political and activist organization can be felt by everyone in the initial upsurge of protest against Trump. That is the challenge before the left and organizations like the ISO—and it is the challenge we, in turn, put to all those who want to struggle against the right and for another world.

Join us at conferences in cities around the country in November.

If you're interested in debating and discussing what it will take to win a better world and the prospects for the left after the elections, join the International Socialist Organization for a daylong conference in a city near you.

For more information:  
[www.internationalsocialist.org/2016-Fall-Marxism-Day-Schools](http://www.internationalsocialist.org/2016-Fall-Marxism-Day-Schools)

## ROUNDTABLE

# The resistance starts now

While Hillary Clinton was calling on her supporters to give Donald Trump a chance, SW contributors had a different response—we collected their comments here.

### Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

Author of *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*

I EXPECTED Hillary Clinton to win simply because I assumed she would get more votes than the openly racist, sexual predator she was running against. But in my opinion, Clinton was never a real alternative.

The emergence of Occupy, Black Lives Matter and 12 million votes for an open socialist was the canary in the coalmine—the status quo can no longer be presented as the answer to the crises imploding across this country. You cannot glibly campaign on the slogan that “America is already great” when for so many, it is not. You cannot patronize people with banal promises to create “ladders of opportunities” when millions of people are drowning in debt, uncertainty and bitterness.

My observation is not intended to dismiss the undeniable reality of racism, xenophobia, hatred and misogyny at the heart of the Trump candidacy. But to reduce the election outcome only to that misses, I think, a deeper issue. There is intense political polarization in this country—the right found an outlet while the Democratic Party buried Sanders and put forward a candidate that embodied the political establishment—the very phenomenon people were revolting against.

Some on the left have talked at length about the desperate need to build and organize an alternative that offers more than “we are not Republicans.” The Democratic Party has arrogantly believed that this alone would always be enough, and we are paying the price for it.

How much longer can we afford to continue to delay the work of organizing a real alternative to the two-party disaster that is on full display today? It’s not an abstraction—it has to be rooted in the real-life organizing that will be necessary to take on Trump and Trumpism.

We can take heart that we are not starting this process from scratch. We can build on the Black Lives Matter movement. We can continue to organize against Dakota Access Pipeline. But we must also connect those struggles to a movement to defend Arabs and Muslims from the existing and coming attacks; to new protests against deportations and the attacks on Latinos and other immigrants; and to the existing struggles for public education and a living wage in cities across the country.

There is much to build on, but much more to accomplish. Fundamentally, these struggles have to be organized on the basis of solidarity and the understanding that all of our fates are linked together—and that the oppression of one is the oppression of all. Trump’s victory is a disaster, but we have no other choice.

### Jesse Hagopian

Seattle high school teacher and editor of *More Than a Score: The New Uprising Against High-Stakes Testing*

AT MY son’s school this morning, his teacher wore her Black Lives Matter shirt and gathered all the second-graders and the families who were there to tell everyone that the school would be a safe place that would take care of everyone.

She had the students talk about how they were feeling. What a wonderful teacher. This means so much to us and so many of the kids.

One Muslim girl didn’t find out about the election until she got to school, and after she hung up her backpack, she then fell to the ground, pounding her fists into it.

It is so important that we work to make our schools places that overtly reject misogyny, racism, Islamophobia, homophobia and all the hate that Trump stands for. Today it feels even more urgent that we transform our schools into sites of resistance.

### Dave Zirin

Nation columnist and author of *Welcome to the Terrordome: The Pain, Politics and Promise of Sports*

DONALD TRUMP as president-elect: It sucks. People are crying at my wife’s job. A guy on my corner is offering free hugs.

Please, everyone be good to yourself. Take a walk. Take that free hug. Drink a lot of water.

What helps me in times like this is to write, and I have four thoughts on what went down:

**1.** Always in these discussions, let’s start with Howard Zinn, who said, “It matters less who is sitting in the White House. It matters who is sitting in.” If you believed that Hillary Clinton was going to deliver this progressive agenda independent of struggle, you would have been terribly disappointed. Our tasks are, in many respects, exactly what they were: to fight for what we believe in as progressives, as radicals and as socialists.

**2.** The Republican Party won this election precisely because they are such a hot mess and the Democratic Party is not. The Republicans had “the privilege of backwardness.” They were such a disorganized clusterfuck that they nominated a racist, sexist nativist who railed against trade deals and against the corruption of Washington, D.C.

The party of “family values” nominated an epic scumbag. The party of “the troops”

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**“Fundamentally, these struggles have to be organized on the basis of solidarity and an understanding that all of our fates are linked.”**

► KEEANGA-YAMAHTTA TAYLOR

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nominated someone who didn’t know what a “gold star family” was and mocked POW John McCain. The party of free trade nominated someone who thinks trade deals should be burned. And they were aghast but had no mechanism to stop him.

What Trump saw—either instinctively or not—was that the fundamental dynamic of this election is that eight years of Obama have produced massive gains for Wall Street and massively little trickle down to the rest of this country. There was anger, and anyone willing to amplify that anger toward Wall Street, toward immigrants, toward women, toward “the Blacks” would go far.

**3.** Hillary Clinton could not credibly make that argument because she ran on being “third-term Obama,” and also because quite simply, she doesn’t believe it. She is the senator of Goldman Sachs.

And here is where we get to the tragedy of this election, and people aren’t going to want to hear it, but it’s the truth. The Democrats had the antidote for Trump in their back pocket: Bernie Sanders. Bernie would



have crushed Trump. Crushed. He would have crushed Trump because his message would have been the same anti-establishment, anti-Wall Street energy, but without the bigotry.

If he had run, all those rural areas that came out for Trump in massive numbers would have split the way they were split in 2008 when—frustrated with Washington—they voted for another outsider named Obama. But the Democratic Party establishment crushed Bernie for having the temerity to challenge Hillary. That’s on them.

**4.** Yes, so much of Trump’s win was animated by sexism, racism, bigotry, even a love of fascism, and we are all feeling that. The KKK is happy, and that is devastating. But if we are talking about all 60 million Trump voters, it’s simply more complicated than to say they’re all bigots.

There is an expression going around that everyone who is a bigot voted for Trump, but not everyone who voted for Trump was a bigot. I agree with that, and I want to share something about my best friend on earth. Best friends since we were six. Wife is Black. Has a biracial daughter. Obama voter. He moved out of New York City to live in Central Florida. He marched every year in the Labor Day parade with his union parents, and he fought the cops after Abner Louima was brutalized by New York’s finest.

He voted for Donald Trump. He didn’t do it because he liked Trump. He did it because partly he is isolated. He also, alone and trying to figure out this political situation by himself, found Hillary Clinton and

the Clinton family so unrepentantly disgusting that voting Trump was his version of lesser evilism.

I’m horrified that he pulled the lever for that dime-store fascist. But I also will continue to talk to him and frankly empathize with why he found the Clinton family so utterly remote from his life, and why he—an enthusiastic Obama voter in 2008—found himself feeling so left behind.

That’s on me for letting him get that isolated. It’s on us to turn this situation around, and we don’t have to wait four years. That starts today. (Okay, maybe tomorrow.)

### Lance Selfa

Author of *The Democrats: A Critical History*

TO PROCESS the disaster that took place on November 8, it’s helpful to look at some of the major facts about the election.

The first thing to note is that Hillary Clinton actually won more votes than Donald Trump—around 200,000 as of the end of Wednesday. When you include the votes for third-party candidates Gary Johnson and Jill Stein, it’s clear that more people voted against Trump than for him.

But of course, the Electoral College—that relic of the 18th century slave power—put Trump in the White House. For the second time in the last five national elections, the person who received the most votes didn’t become president. So much for the “world’s greatest democracy”!

While the votes are still being tallied, it’s clear that the overall turnout declined from 2012, when about 129 million people voted. The number in 2016 is likely to be around

123 million. In fact, it appears that both Clinton and Trump are going to wind up with about the same, or fewer, votes than the losers of the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections received.

While these figures may not take the sting out of Tuesday’s result, they illustrate just how thin a “mandate” Trump can claim. Not only did he lose the popular vote, but neither he nor Clinton measured up to recent elections in motivating people to get to the polls.

Within 24 hours of calling out Trump as a racist, misogynist and lover of dictators, leading Democrats, from President Obama to Bernie Sanders, were issuing statements about how they were willing to work with Trump because, as Obama said, “We’re all on the same team.”

If anyone needed further proof of the utter uselessness of the Democratic Party as an opposition, this was certainly it.

In 2009, after two “wave” elections that handed Democrats control of both the legislative and executive branches of the government, the Republicans were reduced to 178 House members and 41 senators. But the GOP refused to vote for any of Obama’s initiatives—on the contrary, they very quickly took the offensive, particularly in opposing Obama’s health care law.

In the new Congress of 2017, the Democratic minority will have 194 representatives and, along with the two independents who caucus with them, 48 senators. So if the Democrats want to oppose Trump’s agenda, they’re in a better position to do so than Republicans were in 2009.

Keep this in mind when you hear Democratic politicians lament their plight and tell you that the only thing you can do is to elect more of them.

### Elizabeth Schulte

*Socialist Worker* staff writer

AS THE election result came rolling in last night and the realization that Trump was going to win set in, it didn’t matter how closely you’ve been following the election—it was a terrible, sinking feeling.

It was an election between two hugely unpopular candidates, and earlier this year, I remember *SocialistWorker.org* saying that if Clinton kept up the way she was going—offering little to her supporters and riding on the fact that she wasn’t Trump—she might actually lose. But when the Trump campaign hit another new low among so many with the definitive evidence of sexual abuse, it looked like he might be a dead in the water.

Then there was last night.

The political “experts” on TV counting

off the numbers on the big red and blue maps—the ones who were projecting that Hillary Clinton would pull it out in the end—suddenly seemed perplexed. They started talking about the fact that there were two Americas—and one of them was deeply dissatisfied with the status quo.

“The Democratic Party is going to have to start thinking about workers,” said one pundit.

It’s pretty amazing—the Democratic Party ignores the concerns of American workers for decades, and now they’re shocked by dissatisfaction with the status quo? Let’s be honest—no one needs to tell the Democratic Party establishment that workers are dissatisfied. It just assumed they had nowhere else to go, so the party apparatus didn’t care.

Today, I heard an NPR reporter ask a Michigan politician why workers in the state had deserted the Democrats—didn’t they remember that the Obama administration bailed out the auto industry and saved

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**“Imagine if one of the candidates was talking about why jobs really were lost, along with a plan to get them back. We’d be looking at a different picture.”** ▶ JEN ROESCH

all those jobs? But the workers themselves know that while the auto industry bosses got their bailout in 2009, for workers, it came with strings attached—gutting union contracts and work rules, and instituting two-tiered wages.

The Democrats showed once again whose side they were on—auto bosses, not auto workers.

But there’s something else about Michigan that worth mentioning—during the primaries in March, Bernie Sanders won about 23 percent of the vote, about as much as Trump.

People are fed up with the status quo and looking for solutions. Many are looking to the left-wing solutions, but others may look to the right. The right had a voice in Trump, but Clinton never intended her voice to be for the other side. Now the politicians are telling us it’s time for both sides to come together—that’s not true. We need to keep organizing our side to defeat Trumpism in days to come.

When I watched his speech last night, all I could think of is where I was in March when Trump tried to march in my hometown of Chicago. I was outside with hun-

dreds of other people—Black, white, immigrant, Arab, Asian, Muslim—all together to protest his message of hate. He never gave that speech that day—he has to turn tail and leave.

I’m keeping that resistance in mind for the days and months ahead.

## Jen Roesch

*Socialist Worker* contributor and member of the International Socialist Organization

WHILE MILLIONS of people were reeling in shock and horror on the day after election—and tens of thousands of people were taking to the streets in protests—the Democratic Party was headed in another direction. Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Elizabeth Warren and the rest of the establishment came out with statements indicating that they’ve moved on to figuring out how to rule alongside a Trump administration.

But for those of us who will pay the price for this debacle, moving on isn’t a choice.

While the Democrats fueled fear of Trump for the most cynical reasons during the election campaign, we do need to face the reality of an emboldened far right. All over the country today, teachers were the first responders—helping children express their fears and doing their best to assure them that we will stand to protect our most vulnerable.

But if we’re going to fight the resurgent right, we need clarity about how this could have happened, and it won’t be found among the political or media mainstream.

The opening wave of think pieces all tended to arrive at the same simple answer: Election 2016 was decided by uneducated white racist voters, including white women happy to elect a misogynist. People like us who are rightly disgusted by Trump are led to believe that the 60 million people who voted for him are so different from us that we couldn’t possibly understand what, other than bigotry, motivated them.

Of course, there are some contrary facts: A majority of union households, people of color and those making under \$50,000 went for Clinton, and a large base of Trump’s support came from the middle class. Nonetheless, a significant number of white workers and union households did vote for Trump—particularly in the Midwestern Rust Belt states which the election turned on.

Here, we have to understand two things. The first is a depth of despair fed by an economic and social crisis, the scale of which is hard to grasp. Millions of people feel, rightly, that they have been thrown on the scrap heap and left to die alone.

Equally important, there is bitterness at a political establishment that presided over this situation. In the swing states a significant number of counties that went for Trump on Tuesday had gone to Barack Obama in 2008. People voted for hope and change back then—hopes that have been shattered. After Bernie Sanders lost his campaign and endorsed Clinton, Trump was free to exploit the elemental anger at these conditions without a challenge from the left.

Wisconsin illustrates all the dynamics. Some 49 percent of voters there think the U.S. lost jobs to free trade, and they went for Trump by a 2-to-1 margin. But 58 percent think immigrants do more to help the economy than hurt it, and nearly two-thirds of them went for Clinton.

Imagine if someone was talking about why jobs really were lost, along with a plan to get them back—and was defending immigrants. We’d be looking at a different picture.

It’s worth remembering that Wisconsin is the state where workers occupied the Capitol building less than six years before to fight an assault on public-sector unions. That was a festival of solidarity and self-activity—a prelude to the Occupy movement in 2011, which itself exposed and gave left-wing expression to the class anger in society.

When union leaders and Democrats led workers away from the occupation and into a failed electoral challenge, the resulting defeat smashed the unions. The anti-labor attack spread to another of Clinton’s shocking losses: Michigan, once a citadel of union power, where Republicans recently passed an anti-union right-to-work law.

If Wisconsin was one place along the way of Trump’s unexpected path to victory, it isn’t because there’s something irredeemably backward about its working class. The real answers are the bitter fruit of lost battles, disappointed hopes and the failure to build a left-wing alternative.

There is an urgent need for that alternative—and understanding that the soil from which Trump grew is just as fertile for our side is an indispensable starting point.