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USA

Kamala Harris: Not a Progressive nor a “Crazy Leftist”

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Kamala Harris could become the first woman president of the United State if she wins in November. Harris is now the putative Democratic Party candidate, having garnered enough votes to win the nomination at the convention later in August, and many progressive Democrats are trying to convince themselves that she’s a progressive. At the same time, Republican nominee Donald Trump calls her “a radical left lunatic.” She is, however, neither a progressive nor a radical leftist. Her politics are virtually identical to President Joseph Biden’s. But her campaign is gathering momentum and she does have the possibility of stopping Trump—and that’s the most important thing at the moment.

In just a few days, Harris collected enough votes to win the Democratic nomination. In less than a week she raised \$200 million. Supporters rallied around her, for example, 44,000 women who joined one Zoom call as soon as she entered the race raised \$1.5 million. While Biden trailed Trump in the polls, several recent polls now show Harris tied with Trump. Harris appears to be doing better than Biden had been among women, Black voters, and young voters.

Harris, whose father is Black and mother is Indian, immediately faced racist and misogynist attacks from Trump, his running mate J.D. Vance, and their supporters. Trump apologist Sebastian Gorka referred to Harris as, “this disaster whose only qualification is having a vagina and the right skin color.” He and other Trump supporters have called her “a diversity hire,” that is someone who does not have the qualifications to hold a position but was only hired because of their gender or race. Vance claims that Harris and the Democrats are “a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they’ve made.” (Harris has no children of her own but has two step-children with her husband Douglas Emhoff.)

Some progressives in the Democratic Party would like to see Harris as someone like themselves, but there is little basis for it. She fully supported Biden’s economic and social programs—the most significant in half a century—most notably the American Rescue Plan Act (\$1.9 trillion) to support business and workers during COVID, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (\$1.2 trillion), and the Inflation Reduction Act (\$369 billion) to deal with climate issues. Vice-president’s never present their own views, and neither did Harris.

She has also completely supported Biden’s foreign policy, backing Israel and its war on Gaza, supporting Ukraine against the Russian invasion, and opposing China’s rival imperial ambitions. Harris’ reputation for being more progressive regarding Israel is based on statements like this one a few days ago after her meeting with British Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “What has happened in Gaza over the past nine months is devastating,” she said. “The images of dead children and desperate, hungry people fleeing for safety, sometimes displaced for the second, third or fourth time — we cannot look away in the face of these tragedies,” she said, adding, “I will not be silent.”

Perhaps she will not be silent, but she has not said how she would change U.S. policy, if at all.

Trump meanwhile is flailing around, calling Harris every name in the book. A “failed vice-president,” “a bum,” “dumb,” a woman with “crazy San Francisco liberal values.” And, he says, “She’ll appoint hardcore Marxists to the Supreme Court to shred our Constitution of all of our religious liberty.”

Those of us on the left will defend Harris from racist and misogynist attacks, but we will be clear that there is nothing progressive much less leftist about her. She is a Biden Democrat, a centrist, a moderate. But a vote for her could save us from Trump’s authoritarianism and his reactionary plans.

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Once again the far left is debating the question of elections. Within Solidarity, sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, for example Howie Hawkins is arguing for support for Jill Stein for president as the candidate of the Green Party, while Dan La Botz argues that at this time one must support Biden to stop Trump.

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