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Bernie Sanders, socialism, and the 2016 elections

By Sam Webb



Little surprises me these days - I don't know if it's age, or what. But the long quote below from a recent post in Jacobin has me shaking my head.

"We need to understand this point well if we want to make the most of the opportunities presented by the Sanders campaign, especially if Bernie follows through on his plans to give a "major speech" about socialism. [This] will be a great occasion for the Left to debate our own meanings of socialism - but only if we silence our inner Anderson Coopers and discuss Bernie's ideas on their own terms without worrying about how they impact his electability."

"Here's a piece of blasphemy," the author continues: "there are bigger political stakes this year than the winner of the next presidential election. We have a rare opportunity to redefine and revitalize socialism for a new generation and set the terms for an opposition movement that can really change the world."

Bigger stakes?

I find it hard to buy the idea that one potential outcome of next year's elections - the right wing gaining control of all three branches of government - is less significant than the opportunity of the left to debate its understanding of socialism.

To make such a claim isn't "blasphemy" - it's

stupidity.

If the Republicans win the presidency and retain their majority in the Senate and House, politics will quickly become really nasty. After all, consensus and civility aren't their governing style. Breaking heads and using power ruthlessly is. And it's no mystery what will be in their crosshairs: the democratic rights and living standards of the American people and the organizations that defend and fight for them.

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Thus, the idea that the main mission of socialists next year is to tweak their vision of socialism given these "stakes" and while everyone else is beating the bushes to defeat the right strikes me as a modern day version of Nero fiddling as Rome burned. It is fundamentally misguided.

Bernie's main pitch is his relentless opposition to inequality, austerity, unemployment, and the declining living standards of working people.

This may seem a bit harsh, but only someone very detached from the everyday lives of working people, only someone camping out in the world of political abstractions, only someone who fails to understand that politics is more like algebra and physics than simple math, and only someone who is clueless about the role of the left would suggest that the outcome of the presidential election and the elections in general isn't of paramount importance.

While Sanders doesn't run away from his socialist identity, it isn't the first thing out of his mouth on the campaign trail, or even the last thing. Instead, his main pitch is his relentless opposition to inequality, austerity, unemployment, and the declining living standards of working people.

When he walks into an auditorium, his thunder against the right wing billionaire class is accompanied by proposals for reform. He offers a powerful challenge to the reigning orthodoxy of the past thirty years of both parties - neoliberalism, which is wealth redistribution upward, privatization, financialization, and deregulation.

His candidacy is making a passionate case for justice and equality, and appealing to ordinary people to become the authors of their own democracy and lives. But in doing this, Sanders is giving the socialist brand a new legitimacy in the minds of millions of Americans and thus making an inestimable contribution to a socialist future.

Luckily, most people on the left appreciate this. They understand that it can only help the process of socialist transformation as he argues for radical anti-corporate reforms.

Which brings me to my final point. If there is a rift between Bernie and the left it pivots around his assertion that Hillary, who is now embracing many of his campaign themes, isn't an enemy, but an ally when it comes to overriding imperative of defeating the Republican right and reigning in some of the worst excesses of corporate practices. Everyone has to make up his or her mind on this matter, but my hope is that the left will take its lead from Bernie.



Sam is a member on National Committee of CPUSA.

Racial slurs have no place in football

By Judith Le Blanc

The leaves are changing. The scent of pumpkin spice lattes is in the air. In short, it's football season. And like millions of my fellow Americans, I love football.

But I'm also American Indian.

So, for me, football season also means hearing a racial slur all the time. It's used by sports teams around the country - and by Washington, D.C.'s National Football League team in particular. You may know that franchise as the Redskins. I refer to it as the R-word.

Natives have been calling on sports teams to do away with the slur for 50 years, along with other mocking mascots and racist caricatures of Natives employed by teams of all kinds. Professional outfits should know better, but so should schools and communities.

So, I celebrated recently, along with much of Indian Country, when California Governor Jerry Brown signed the California Racial Mascots Act into law. It banned the state's public schools from

using the R-word to name sports teams. Schools in four California counties will soon have to rebrand their buildings, logos, uniforms, and mascots.

For Native children, the R-word and its associated mascots are demeaning and disparaging, eroding their self-confidence and self-image. Unsurprisingly, peer-reviewed studies have suggested that racist mascots can hurt the performance of Native students.

Most people have the good sense not to use the R-word to our faces. So why would you plaster it across a stadium?

Dropping the R-word alone won't solve these deep crises in Indian Country. But it's a crucial step toward restoring the equity, dignity, and democracy taken from the first people of this land.

At the very least, it'll let us all get back to enjoying football - without the nasty reminder that the rights of American Indians still aren't fully recognized.

California Gov. Jerry Brown signed the California Racial Mascots Act into law.

French communist leader speaks on Paris attacks

By Pierre Laurent

Our country has just experienced one of the worst events in its history. Last night's simultaneous terrorist attacks in Paris and Saint-Denis, for which Daesh [short for Dawlat al-Islamiyah f'al-Iraq wa al-Sham] claims responsibility, and which, at this moment, have resulted in 127 deaths and 200 casualties, were horrifying. France is in mourning.

The day after the carnage, our first thoughts go out to the victims, their families, to those close to them, to the witnesses and to all those whose lives were threatened. For all, the pain is immense. Each and every one of us in France feels deeply wounded.

We salute the work of law enforcement, the emergency services, the Accident and Emergency doctors, healthcare workers and public service personnel, whose response to the situation has been exemplary, as has the people's solidarity, which was felt straight away.

Less than a year after the attacks in January [on the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo on Jan. 7], the Republic has been struck at its heart. Even as a state of emergency has now been declared by the government, reinforcement of the police and of the justice system's resources is an imperative. The state must find suitable ways to guarantee the people's safety in the long term.



I ask our people not to give in to fear, and to stand together for freedom, equality, fraternity, and for peace. We must make careful distinctions between issues, and avoid stigmatization. Together, we must firmly reject hatred and racism.

France is affected by the war and the destabilization that is plaguing the Middle-East. The fight against terrorism calls for increased engagement and international solutions.

It can only be won by coming together to create a united society that places, at the heart of all its decisions, human emancipation, the values of the Republic and peace.

The French Communist Party, its representatives and its elected officials, will support all initiatives that, in the days to come, will allow our fellow citizens to take on together this challenge and to open up a path of hope for our people.

In this tragic time, the French Communist Party has put all election-campaign activities on hold.

Together, we must firmly reject hatred and racism.

Fight for \$15 comes to Palm Coast, Florida

By Joshua Leclair

In one of Florida's newer retiree communities, activists rallied Nov. 10 in support of the national day of action for the Fight for \$15.

Team Flagler (Flagler County, Fla.), part of the Democratic Progressive Caucus of Florida, held a sign calling for a \$15 minimum wage and the right to form a union at a busy intersection in Palm Coast (30 minutes north of Daytona Beach). They were joined by other Democratic activists, retired union members and representatives from the Volusia/Flagler AFL-CIO.

One of the organizers of the rally, Sheila Zinkerman, said "No one that is working 40 hours a week should be living in poverty." One retiree remarked, "Times sure have changed. You used to be able to work full-time and provide for your family AND get healthcare and a pension. Now folks are just fighting to survive."

The day of action did not end there. Activists from the Volusia/Flagler AFL-CIO also collected a community survey about local jobs and wages from Daytona Beach locals and leafleted local fast food restaurants and retail stores with "15 Reasons for \$15."

When asked why the local labor council was engaging in the Fight for \$15 National Day of Action, Field Representative Yennifer Mateo said, "Working 40,50,60 hours a week should provide enough for people to not need assistance like food stamps and Medicaid. Why people work so hard and struggle to feed their family makes no sense, especially when those companies they work for make billions and get crazy tax breaks."

Lizt Alfonso en los Grammy Latinos

Granma

Este 19 de noviembre, en el MGM Grand Garden Arena de Las Vegas, la compañía danzaria cubana se convertirá en la primera que actúa en la famosa ceremonia

Hasta donde se tiene noticia, por primera vez en la historia de los Grammy Latinos actuará una compañía danzaria de la Isla en la afamada ceremonia. El honor le ha correspondido a Lizt Alfonso Dance Cuba (LADC), que el venidero 19 de noviembre evidenciará su clase en la gala de premiaciones. La esperada presentación ocurrirá al mismo tiempo en que parte de la agrupación que dirige la maestra y coreógrafa Lizt Alfonso protagoniza, por segunda ocasión, una exitosa temporada en el New Victory Theatre, situado en la emblemática Calle 42 y Broadway, en el corazón de Manhattan. Ahora en Nueva York, el espectáculo Cuba Vibra! continúa sumando admiradores después de conquistar a los espectadores de Princeton y Boston.

En cuanto a los Grammy Latinos, la Alfonso informó por vía correo electrónico que «la compañía ha sido invitada a participar de la ceremonia de premiación de los Latin Grammy, así que allí estaremos. Creo que somos la primera compañía de danza cubana que se presenta de forma mayoritaria en este certamen. Estaremos compartiendo la escena con populares artistas latinoamericanos, haciendo brillar el nombre de nuestra islita con toda el alma».

La versatilidad, el virtuosismo y la gracia de LADC podrán ser apreciados una vez más en esta octava gira de la compañía por Estados Unidos, donde ha regresado para poner de manifiesto nuevamente su poderoso estilo fusión que la distingue. La venidera edición de los Grammy Latinos no será una excepción.

Como ya se ha hecho habitual, artistas nuestros optarán por los galardones de la edición 16. En este caso aparecen en el listado de los nominados el Septeto Santiaguero y José Alberto «El Canario» por Tributo a Los Compadres. No quiero llanto, donde también compite Alain Pérez por El alma del son – Tributo a Matamoros. Por su parte, el pianista, compositor y jazzista Iván «Melón» Lewis optarán por los galardones en las categorías de Mejor Álbum de Jazz Latino y Mejor Nuevo Artista por Ayer y hoy, mientras Silvio Rodríguez y Calle 13 concursan con Ojos color sol en el apartado de Mejor Video Musical Versión Corta.

Según ha trascendido, la Academia Latina de la Grabación homenajeará al ídolo de multitudes Roberto Carlos, a quien ha denominado Persona del Año 2015, en tanto entregará el Premio a la excelencia musical, por sus notables contribuciones artísticas, al cubano Pablo Milanés, los españoles Ana Belén y Víctor Manuel, la dominicana Ángela Carrasco, el brasileño Djavan, al argentino Gato Barbieri, y los puertorriqueños de El Gran Combo.

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