

2020 elections & capitalist instability: How should we prepare?

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Mass demonstrations, a general strike, in Puerto Rico overthrew Governor Ricky Roselló in July 2019.

We should prepare for a mass strike against a stolen election.

The present election is taking place in a period of deep instability. It is fraught with incredible dangers and at the same time opportunities for the working class in this country. What takes place in the U.S. will have repercussions internationally.

A lot will depend on what we do.

On the one hand, an unprecedented movement against police terror and white supremacy has swept the country. There is not a single town or city that has not been touched by protests of one kind or another. While it is spontaneous to one degree, it is deeply political and can be characterized as a mass uprising.

This movement is a challenge to the capitalist state and it is taking up the long-delayed fundamental question of racism and white supremacy in this country, what was described by W.E.B. Du Bois as the “unfinished revolution” in his famous book “Black Reconstruction in America.”

This remarkable struggle is taking place in the midst of a deepening capitalist economic crisis, possibly the worst in our lifetimes, spurred on and coupled with a deadly pandemic that has killed more people in the United States than all the U.S. soldiers killed in the [Vietnam War plus four other wars combined](#).

Unemployment is at record highs. The working class will eventually face a tsunami of evictions and foreclosures that will certainly top those of the 2008 capitalist crisis.

RNC ‘white power’ rally, DNC capitulates

It’s easy to sum up the Republican National Convention as essentially a “white

power” rally meant as a clarion call to all of Trump’s most reactionary, racist, neofascist supporters. Patricia and Mark McCloskey, who pointed guns at Black Lives Matter protesters in St. Louis, Mo., spoke there. Both are facing charges of unlawful use of a weapon.

None of the rhetoric of the RNC was hidden or coded. It was an outright racist attack on the burgeoning movement, designed to spur on violence against protesters under the cover of labeling the BLM movement as “rioters, antifa, anarchists, outsiders and communists.”

No one can forget that Trump began his first campaign by labeling Mexican immigrants as “rapists and criminals.”

The Democratic National Convention was no beacon of hope. Instead, it was in many respects a cowardly reaction to Trump’s campaign of redbaiting and attacks on protesters. In essence, the DNC agenda was driven by the rightwing.

Republican billionaires and militarists like Colin Powell, Michael Bloomberg and former Ohio Gov. John Kasich, who ran on a campaign to abolish abortion, shared the DNC podium. On the other hand, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was given a mere 90 seconds to speak.

Biden’s denunciation of “riots,” referring to the Kenosha protests, does the exact opposite of defending people against the arch reactionary movement that Trump has unleashed. It emboldens them.

More recently, the Biden campaign touted former Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder’s endorsement — a slap in the face to the people of Flint, a majority Black city whose water was poisoned; Detroit, whose assets were robbed through imposed bankruptcy; and Benton Harbor. Republican Snyder imposed “emergency financial manager” dictators over more than half of Michigan’s Black population.

Stolen election, Trump coup

In this context, it is impossible to ignore the possibility of the November election being either stolen or hijacked by the utterly undemocratic Electoral College system, or the serious threat of Trump refusing to leave the White House. (See “[Trump lays groundwork to steal election.](#)”)

Trump’s antics should be taken seriously, when he tells people to vote twice, or spews lies that mail-in ballots are invalid. His attempts to dismantle the U.S. Postal Service are clearly in preparation for what might turn out to be much larger developments in November. (See “[Wrecking the post office and elections.](#)”)

We should look back in history at the 2000 election between George W. Bush and Al Gore, when right-wing violence and vote tampering in Florida helped Bush steal the election by gaining an Electoral College advantage.

Our immediate tasks

The capitalist state’s repressive apparatus — that is, the reactionary police, sheriffs, Homeland Security and Border Patrol, and their extralegal forces like the Proud Boys, neo-Nazis, etc. — was temporarily caught off guard by the tidal wave of protests all across the country. Now, under the direction of Trump, they are unleashing a campaign of terror in an attempt to crush the movement.

Let’s vigorously defend and broaden support for all of those arrested, whether it is in Minneapolis, Portland, Kenosha, San Diego, Tallahassee, New York City or in so many other places. (See “[Organize to defeat the racist backlash.](#)”)

Prepare for November: Call for general strike of the people

There should be no passive acceptance of a stolen election, regardless of how it unfolds. Any such circumstance must be considered illegitimate. The stakes are too

high.

The working class must prepare as much as possible to intervene on its own behalf. We can't wait for the Democrats — particularly if they are inclined to lay down and wait for another four years — nor concede and stand on the sidelines.

Instead, we should prepare for a general strike of the people. Whether employed or unemployed, students or youth, organized or unorganized — the goal is to shut the system down through massive action. For those who are able, plan to march on Washington, D.C. and occupy the capital until Trump leaves. We need to appeal to the unions and to the community directly.

If Biden prevails, it does not mean the struggle is off.

He will be presiding over a capitalist crisis and has no answers whatsoever for our class. Our message must be to energetically push the movement forward to demand: End police terror and white supremacy! Health care for all! Cancel rents and mortgage foreclosures! Jobs or guaranteed income for all! Hazard pay and workers' rights! No to wars and sanctions!

Should workers prepare for 'October surprise'?

The potential for imperialist war, which is driven by economic forces beyond either candidate's personal control, is greater than ever — whether it is against Venezuela, Iran, Russia or China.

In an act of provocation, U.S. spy planes have flown over Chinese military bases. The rhetoric against China has continued unabated.

Leonardo Flores, Latin American coordinator for Code Pink, has documented an increase in U.S. action against Venezuela. (See "[The stage is set for a Venezuela October surprise.](#)")

Iran continues to be under attack from severe sanctions and military threats.

Intervene as an independent class force

For much of the working class, the pending elections are viewed as a referendum against racism and reaction. There is little illusion that a vote for Biden will end the suffering that much of the population is enduring. It is more a question of getting rid of Trump.

Some younger voters, particularly those involved in the Bernie Sanders movement, who passionately fought for health care, the Green New Deal, an end to student debt and many other issues, view a vote for Biden as a dead end.

The elections will certainly be an important barometer. But what ultimately determines the direction of history, whether it is this immediate period or more long term, is the struggle between classes. This includes not only our class, whether unemployed or working, of all nationalities and genders, and global in character; but also bigger world developments reflecting the crisis of capitalism.

Our job as revolutionary socialists is to do everything in our power to defend the current movement and push beyond the electoral arena. What is critical for the working class is to intervene boldly in its own interests in whatever crisis presents itself during the early winter months.

