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Follow the money: Exposing the capitalists behind attacks on abortion rights

written by Gregory E. Williams
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Sept. 12 march for abortion rights in New Orleans. Photo: Louisiana Abortion Rights Action Committee

On Nov. 13, the Louisiana Abortion Rights Action Committee (LARAC) made a significant contribution to the movement with their webinar, “Follow the Money: End the Capitalist War on Women.” Since the ultra-right-wing Supreme Court’s overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, LARAC has led resistance in the streets of New Orleans. Louisiana has one of the strictest abortion bans in the country.

The webinar addressed how the right-wing movement attacking the reproductive rights of women and other child-bearing people is funded by and serves the interests of the filthy-rich capitalists. This is a fact often left out of the abortion discussion in the mainstream media, where the “debate” is framed in terms of differences in religious views and paints an image of a right-wing movement coming out of

nowhere.

Those leading the militant fightback in Louisiana and elsewhere know better.

Exposing Louisiana monarchy

LARAC activists began their exposé at the state level. As Edith Romero of LARAC put it, “It’s important to know who are the people in power.” Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry, who is expected to run for governor, has played a major role in attacking abortion rights.

Romero, an immigrant healthcare worker, explained: “Jeff Landry is a very vocal anti-abortion, anti-vaxx, sexist, transphobic, homophobic person ... He sued to get rid of Medicaid, depriving 700,000 people of much needed medical services ... He sued several times against mask mandates and basic safety policies in Louisiana ... He sued to cancel DACA ...

“Multiple of his companies hire immigrant workers to pay them less than U.S.-born workers ... He is anti-immigrant but needs them for his own benefit. He fought diligently to criminalize abortion and have it as a crime that can be prosecuted.”

Romero laid out the forces funding Landry’s right-wing politics. His campaign contributors in 2021 include Inwood Petroleum (contributed \$80,000); oil and gas company Harvey Gulf International Marine (\$50,000); and more. The presentation explained that Landry himself, unsurprisingly, has big stakes in oil and gas companies.

The same capitalists who are profiting by destroying our planet are reaping the benefits of dividing the working class with vicious attacks on women, LGBTQ2S people and people of color.

Military-industrial complex is anti-women

LARAC organizer Elena Voisin, a student at Loyola University, explained the role of the military-industrial complex in the anti-women assaults.

“Just this year, close to \$2 trillion was given to the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy ... They contract hundreds of billions of dollars to businesses [like Lockheed Martin]. All of this is to create exorbitant profits for them and their government conspirators ...

“Every year these corporations spend hundreds of millions to influence politicians ... all to get them to increase the defense budget. And the next year they are given even larger contracts, so the bribes pay off ... Not to mention politicians’ personal investments in these corporations ...

“How does the government finance this? Taxes and banks. Banks are profiting off wars. The government never has enough reserve funds to finance their wars, so they have to resort to loans ... Under the guise of reducing the national debt, they cut social programs ... They will cut anything except military spending.”

Webinar host Sally Jane Black—a queer, trans woman worker—added that “the same right-wing organizations pushing this anti-abortion agenda are the ones pushing the military-industrial complex.”

Indeed, the U.S. imperialists’ military spending is an all-out assault on the working class in this country as well as on those harmed and killed in target countries.

Voisin explained the mechanisms of “control and suppression” at play here. “Especially without social programs to help, the medical and childcare expenses alone can trap whole families in poverty. There is already little social mobility, but now it’s out of the question ...

“Abortion restrictions are just one part of the super-exploitation of the working class. This exploitation is necessary for the military-industrial complex ... The sooner

we come together as workers against our common enemies, the sooner we can all be liberated.”

Roe v. Wade won in the streets

LARAC organizer and hospitality worker Heidi Jordan debunked the view that progressive movements can be successful by playing by the oppressors’ rules. Jordan stated: “Representatives of the oppressor always say, ‘just wait, it’ll change, we’ll change,’ but history has demonstrated over and over again that that’s not true. They placate. They use bribery, flattery, grants, deception and positions.” Jordan explained that when these “soft” tactics fail, the capitalist state does not hesitate to use brutal repression.

Progressive change does not come down from benevolent rulers. Rather, it is the power of the organized people that forces the rulers to make concessions. Roe v. Wade was won in just such a way, Jordan explained.

“The struggle for the right to a safe, legal abortion in the 1970s was part of a broader movement for women’s liberation. Roe v. Wade was won in the street, not in the homes of rich women or in the halls of Congress.”

In a sharp rebuke to those who want us to isolate our struggles and to undermine solidarity among all working-class and oppressed people, Jordan cited the historical record, showing how the women’s movement of the 1970s fought on all fronts—for LGBTQ2S rights, against racism, in support of the Black Panther Party, and to end the U.S. imperialists’ war of aggression against Vietnam.

She explained, furthermore, that this was a global movement. To be effective, today’s struggle must be as broad as its predecessor.

Bringing it all together

Gavrielle Gemma, with LARAC and the NOLA-based Workers Voice Socialist Movement, summed up many aspects of the appeal that LARAC is making.

“We call it abortion access because even when we had the legal right, we had to defend it with our bodies against attacks,” Gemma said. “We felt that it was very important to expose who are the forces behind and funding these right-wing assaults ...The hidden economic hand is left untouched [in the discussions that focus just on elections]. [And there was] \$17 billion spent on these recent elections ...

“The right-wing didn’t completely create a tsunami against the Democrats ... But what we have had is the predominance in the economy of the military, as well as oil and gas, and insurance and banking—these are controlling elements of the capitalist economy, and they are controlling the political situation. These are far-right-wing forces ...

“We are the ones that are being targeted by the super-rich ... [There has been an] unbelievable accumulation of wealth in fewer and fewer hands. This has gone on through all administrations.”

Gemma made a moving appeal to take the movement to the next level, not relying on official channels—not even those of the supposedly progressive Democratic Party.

“We should be up there [in Baton Rouge] linking arms at the Louisiana State Capitol when they are back in session in the spring ... They are terrified of our unity.”

