

# The populist smokescreen: How both parties serve monopoly capital

written by John Parker  
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Los Angeles, June 10 – John Parker, coordinator of the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice and a member of the steering committee for the Community Self-Defense Coalition, speaks during the ongoing rebellion against ICE fascism.

*In May, the Struggle for Socialism Party (SSP) Los Angeles branch discussed the new book, “Against fascism: reclaiming populism’s legacy for today’s class struggle,” compiled by Louisiana socialist Gregory Williams.*

*Following is part two of a presentation for the series of classes, given by John Parker on May 10. He is an organizer with SSP, the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice, and the [Community Self Defense Coalition](#), which is confronting ICE on the ground in Los Angeles. The section of the book discussed in this presentation focuses on the 1991 Louisiana gubernatorial campaign of former Ku Klux Klan (KKK) leader David Duke.*

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In 1991, David Duke was called a populist. Now, Trump is being called a populist. Neither of them is offering *anything* to empower the working class. We know from the Communist Manifesto that there are irreconcilable differences between the ruling class and the working class. But many academics will tell you that populists are fascists – they’re this, they’re that, but no, that’s not true.

That’s not the history of populism. Populism is another word for “peopleism.” That’s the definition used by the original populists. Is a Nazi a person of the people? Well, what people are you talking about? Because Nazis aren’t for Black folks. They’re not for our immigrant siblings. We need clarity because when they try to deny you the history of a word, they’re also trying to deny the reality that’s going on.

Another thing from this reading that jumped out is how the fascists promise to

“drain the swamp,” that they’re going to get rid of all the corruption and entrenched power. Duke said this. He said he’s for the working person, he’s trying to stop the privileged folks.

And what does Trump say? He says he’s going to drain the swamp, drain the swamp of the privileged folks. He doesn’t like to say *corporate* folks or anything, but the privileged folks in government who are against the working people. He’s going to drain the swamp. But look what he did when he went into office – Trump and Elon Musk. Musk’s got the information to steal Social Security. And he’s pocketed so much in profits with SpaceX and everything.

Here’s another thing. When Duke was running for governor, he wasn’t able to defeat the other candidate, Edwin Edwards. Edwards wasn’t a fascist, but he didn’t have anything to offer, either. There were economic problems – the wage problems, the theft of the people’s money in the treasury, with corporate subsidies and giveaways, the taxes that were not being taken from the rich, all the ways that they were impoverishing the working class.

But the Democrats didn’t have an answer, just like today. Kamala Harris and Joe Biden didn’t have an answer for stopping the theft. The military is taking all the money away from health care and all those kinds of things. They didn’t have an answer for that, and that’s one of the reasons Kamala Harris lost.

Even though Duke didn’t win, he came close. That was because the Democrats didn’t have an answer for what was going on – the economic crisis, the systemic problems. They didn’t want to have an answer for that.

You know, when you talk about Ukraine, it’s interesting, the Democrats want to act like the saviors of self-determination for the people and freedom for the Ukrainian people, when the fact is that they were cooperating with BlackRock and others to

subjugate and loot Ukraine. They're enabling fascism. And maybe they take it a little bit slower as they take over the wealth, the grains, all the stuff from Ukraine, privatizing it, and then taking it for U.S. monopoly capitalism.

Then Trump wins, and he does it much faster. And it's funny how they're calling him a populist. But other folks might look at the situation and think the Democrats are more like populists, because they're supposed to be for the working class, and aren't as overt in plundering Ukraine. But in fact, they weren't for the working class or Ukrainian people.

Trump is really bad because he's not for the Ukrainian people, either. In fact, he's worse. And like he said about Gaza, "it's mine." He's trying to take over the land and capital, like in Ukraine. He's doing it at a much faster pace.

As for the white supremacy in Ukraine, people say, "well, that's not white supremacy, they're both white, right?" No. Hitler had a name for the people who were supposed to be inferior - maybe even not people, maybe animals - and in Ukraine, they call the Russian-speaking Ukrainians that. That includes the people in the eastern Donbass region. This is also white supremacy.

After the 2014 U.S.-backed coup, the Ukrainian government (now represented by Zelensky) passed a law restricting the use of the Russian language in state affairs and trying to drive it out of community life. And they've criminalized being in a communist or socialist organization. So, anyway, the racism, the fascist ideology of white supremacy, the Democrats have pushed that in spades in Ukraine.

The Democrats aren't going to stop fascism in this country or anywhere else. It's going to take the workers to stop fascism. They're not going to stop the genocide in Gaza. They've orchestrated it, and Biden passed the baton right on to Trump.

The Democrats are serving a purpose for the monopolies. What they're afraid of isn't

fascism. They're afraid of socialism and communism. And in the 1960s, when things were going on the rise, it was harder for George Wallace and other fascist folks to carry out their aims. The Civil Rights and other movements pushed them back.

But it was also because of the international situation. There was the Soviet Union and revolutionary China, and they were helping to liberate Africa. These socialist countries provided military and other forms of support to the African liberation struggles. Two-thirds of Africa was liberated.

The ruling class, the Democrats, and Republicans – they're still very afraid of what socialist countries can do, or what the socialist movement can do. So, the Democrats act like they're against fascism, but they're enabling it now. It will take a strong movement of the working class to defeat it.

It's hard. You look at the news, and you're just depressed about all the horrible stuff going on. Just look at Gaza, and everything Trump does, you think, "How can he get away with this?" He's pardoning all these folks. He's pardoned assassins of Black folks, cops who've killed, and so you're seeing this stuff, you're like, "How can this happen? I don't know what to do."

But there's a lot of organizing going on. Usually, it's not talked about in any meaningful way in the corporate media, but the Community Self-Defense Coalition is being talked about. German and Japanese media came to talk about it. They found out about a lot of this from the Struggle-La Lucha newspaper.

But the interest right now, I mean, just today we had a large meeting, and a lot of people are new. The organization went from 60-something, and now it's about 80 organizations. And it's got functioning committees: patrol committee, outreach committee, fundraising committee. It's become very organized, very serious, and we've seen ICE folks get chased away.

So it's a real threat. It shows that there's a consciousness that just hasn't gone away, in spite of all the attacks and the economy on the decline. We're seeing more and more people come back and talk about trying to get involved. It's a hopeful time, and that's why I'm glad this book was written. We can get the history straight and get our plans and ideological orientation together. But the most important thing is to join an organization. And hopefully join a socialist organization – and hopefully the Struggle for Socialism Party.

