

# **Your Home, Your Vote, the Future of the World**

A Three-Part Political Education Series on the Politics of Basic Needs

## **Session Three**

Surviving the Pandemic: Nationalization, Real Democracy, and Class Power  
Sponsored by the Oakland Area of the League of Revolutionaries for a New  
America

**ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED FOR REVOLUTIONARIES IN OAKLAND, CA In June, 2020**  
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Purpose: Since our last lesson conditions for working people, continue to worsen under a broken economy still reeling from the global pandemic, with an economic impact that will be felt for months. As workers are grappling with this uncertainty, and despite the warnings of gathering in large crowds, thousands of people across the country are protesting the murder of George Floyd by four Minnesota police officers. This event, as well as countless other deaths of black men and women at the hands of white police officers is one of many legacy conditions of Slavery and the economic system of American Capitalism that was built from it.

The main reading for this lesson: Rally Comrades! Article “Next Steps in the Battle of the Ballot” <http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/2020/05/next-steps-in-the-battle-of-the-ballot/>, and Elections 2020: As the South Goes, so Goes the Nation, <http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/2020/05/elections-2020-as-the-south-goes-so-goes-the-nation/>

See Also :

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**Diagram on Class Interests: (Attached)**

**Understanding the Southern Strategy** (attached below)

Thought: NO Justice, No Peace Austin Long-Scott (Attached)

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## **Agenda**

<b>Session 3: Basic Needs Politics: Nationalization, True Democracy, Vision Forward</b>
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Housing, Hedge Cities and other Basic Needs (Session 1)



**Session 3: Part One 11:00 am - 12:30 am ( video, read article and discussion)****Question #1: What are examples of Social Wealth? Why is Nationalization an important to insure Basic Needs?****11:00 - 11:20 Video: Need for nationalization - but currently health care tied to jobs**

No job so no health insurance - 7 min clip from PBS news hour

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/for-many-americans-health-coverage-is-tied-to-a-job-and-now-they-have-neither>

**Next Steps in the Battle of the Ballot: (Read article out loud taking turns)**

In March, the COVID-19 pandemic quickly eclipsed the 2020 presidential election campaign in the consciousness of the American people. Most of the major remaining primaries were postponed until May or even June. Although the Sanders campaign conceded the nomination, the political situation today is so historically unstable that no outcome can be considered certain. We are experiencing a spiraling death toll, tens of millions of families with no paychecks, and perhaps most importantly, the early stirrings of the backlash against the \$4.5 trillion corporate bailout. Given the rapid consolidation of corporate dictatorship, we cannot, at this time, even know for sure that the Democratic or Republican Conventions or even the November elections will be allowed to proceed.

The coronavirus crisis brought to light and sharply aggravated the underlying antagonism that has already been steadily destroying the economy and American society itself for decades. Modern advances in robotics and artificial intelligence have created an unsustainable gulf between wealth and poverty, begetting whole tent cities of houseless people in the richest cities in America. A whole new class of millions of unemployed and underemployed workers was created when they were left behind by labor-replacing technology. They are being driven out of any employment except the most menial, temporary, and part-time service jobs, work that does not pay well enough for them to be able to survive. Clearly, our existing private property system is no longer capable of distributing the means of subsistence to people in the high-tech economy.

The devastating impact of COVID-19 is a direct result of the broken, profit-driven healthcare and housing industries. The healthcare system is failing completely to provide testing equipment, adequate treatment for patients, and protective gear for healthcare workers. The housing crisis turned public health orders to “shelter in place” into a cruel joke, because so many people have no place to shelter in.

### **The Politics of a New Class**

After 2008, the new class of workers displaced by technology increasingly found itself with no healthcare, no steady work, no affordable housing, insufferable debt, and facing climate disaster. In 2016 and 2018, they began to turn to electoral politics to fight for their future, especially the youth, who were disproportionately facing housing and food insecurity, burdened with debt, and preyed upon by police violence. Refusing to accept lives of misery, they sought out political movements open to a vision of a new and better world. In 2020, the Sanders presidential campaign became a vehicle for many of them, as well as for millions of Americans concerned with democracy, peace, and the survival of the planet. As Sanders has pointed out, and exit polls confirm, regardless of the delegate count, his campaign won the policy debate and the generational debate.

From the beginning, the movement of the new class charted a collision course with not only Trump but also the Democratic Party establishment and the entire capitalist system. When members of the new marginalized class flooded into the Sanders campaign, they brought out and intensified class divisions that had been contained and controlled within the Democratic Party for decades. Sanders’ early victories caused the ruling class to move immediately to secure its interests by trying to block the campaign in the South Carolina primary, on Super Tuesday, and on March 10.

Sanders refused to concede the nomination until April 8, when the delegate count and the pandemic crisis made it difficult for him to continue. The fight for the Sanders program had already shifted and begun plunging into the battle to protect human lives. COVID-19 has proved that human beings are expendable to the system, and it cannot meet their basic needs. The movement is not over — it is just beginning, and no corporate politicians will ever be able to politically control it.

### **Practical Program**

The process of splitting and fracturing of the Democrats is already underway and will inevitably lead to a complete rupture. The only question is when. It was unmistakable in the bitter debates over the bailout bill. The fight for free treatment for COVID-19 has reignited the demand for Medicare for All.

The destruction of income has prompted calls for rent forgiveness, that will inevitably get louder as soon as the temporary eviction stays are over. These demands are impacting the national elections as well as local, regional, and national battles. They are the foundation for an independent third-party political movement breaking out, both inside and outside the Democratic Party, one that will continue to emerge and coalesce throughout the 2020 election season and on into 2022 and 2024.

The heart of the movement around Sanders is not ideological, but rather a practical program. It is a demand for Medicare for All, decent housing for all, meaningful work, a path to citizenship for all, an end to mass incarceration, a Green New Deal, and decent education without debt. Sanders did not invent this program. It is a reflection of the demands of the new class, that speaks to the needs of the American people, and is rooted in fundamental moral values of solidarity, love, and compassion.

It is a simple fact that policies necessary for economic well-being today will require public ownership of larger and larger sectors of the economy to secure an equitable distribution of social wealth. Important parts of the Sanders program consist of nationalization, or partial nationalization, of key sectors of the American economy in the interests of the working class, not corporations. The point of the matter is that displaced workers and the planet they live in cannot survive without these policies.

The role of revolutionaries is to participate in and elucidate this motion through each of its stages as it confronts the capitalist class. Within the Democratic Party, the stage we are in right now is the fight to throw the blow at the pro-corporate politicians controlling it and break the workers free from the capitalists' grip. We do this when we fight uncompromisingly for the basic demands of the working class. We cannot get to a real workers' party and a new society without making this happen first. The working class, and especially the class of workers discarded by the tech economy, make up the foundation of this movement. However, they cannot

win without unity, and revolutionaries have a responsibility to elevate the battle for unity at every step of the way.

This means addressing the “Southern strategy” that was used to defeat Sanders on Super Tuesday and afterward. There is an old saying that, “The South controls the nation, and Wall Street controls the South.” Ever since the defeat of Reconstruction, the violent suppression of Southern workers, especially African Americans, has served as the political base for fascism in America. Exit polls showed that Southern Democratic voters supported Biden because they thought he had the best chance to get Trump’s boot off their necks and to stop the relentless attacks on their voting rights, healthcare, living standards, human rights, and the environment. The same polls, however, also indicated that the majority of them supported the Medicare for All that was the centerpiece of the Sanders campaign. Support for Sanders was also impeded by relentless voter suppression, which targeted especially young people who overwhelmingly supported him in every demographic group.

### **Vision of a New World**

The primary election results reveal once again that no national movement can win without deeply connecting with the masses of Southern workers. At the same time, as they fight for this class unity, revolutionaries also battle for a vision of the new world made possible by modern technology. The revolution in renewable energy means that the Green New Deal is not a wild dream but a practical project to save the earth and put the fossil fuel industry out of business. The introduction of robotics and artificial intelligence into agriculture and production means that abundance for all is a concrete and attainable objective.

What is needed is an economy freed from the restraints of private property, where this abundance can be freely distributed based on need, instead of being hoarded and strangled by private profiteers. The value of the Sanders campaign, and the movement going forward, is that it opens the door to these discussions, and allows revolutionaries to teach while we fight. The threat of an astronomical COVID-19 death toll has clarified that it is human life itself that is at stake.

What affects some of us affects us all. The crisis is an opportunity to step up the struggle for the distribution of social wealth based on need, since so many more

millions suddenly have no money. The call for free vaccines, free healthcare during the crisis, paid leave for workers, and rent forgiveness is a start.

The political battle over the bailout has just begun, whether to use public money to save corporate profits or to save human lives in the streets. The rage of our class is rising, and with unity and vision, it will transform society. **RC**

**12:15 - 12:30 View and discuss Diagram on Class Interests (attached)**

**Session 3: Part 2 12:30 - 1:30 (definition, read article and discussion)**

**12:30 - 12:50: Southern Strategy defined (Read article aloud taking turns)**

## **Elections 2020: As the South Goes, so Goes the Nation**

Both major political parties in the U.S. have had their own “Southern strategy.” It is the long-established formula for political power for the ruling class in this country. At the heart of the formula for political power is: first divide the Southern working class, employing the weapon of white supremacy, and then deliver the South to the ruling class as a reactionary political counter-balance.

By delivering a Solid South, the political party that won the South was assured of its victory. The openly white supremacist Southern Democratic party, throughout the era of Jim Crow, played exactly that role in the Roosevelt “New Deal” Democratic coalition. It ensured the Democratic party became the ruling party, while at the same time blocking progressive legislation such as universal healthcare (today called Medicare-for-All), and restricting union organizing in the South (through Right-to-Work laws).

In the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement, the Democratic party now included millions of Black voters in the South. Bill Clinton, in 1992, himself a Southerner from Arkansas, employed a new Southern strategy based upon a coalition of Blacks and enough whites to win the South and assure victory in the elections of that year. In

the process, the liberal New Deal coalition lost its dominance and marked a shift to the right by the Party.

Now, in 2020, we have been witness in the Democratic party primaries to how the formula of “as the South goes, so goes the nation” is in play even now. In South Carolina, the Southern strategy was deployed. This time, though, a Black political elite in the South played its role in delivering the South to the ruling elements of the Democratic party. The Congressional Black Caucus co-hosted the debate held in Charleston, South Carolina, just before the primary. On the very next day, Jim Clyburn, a congressman from South Carolina and one of the most powerful leaders in the Congressional Black Caucus, endorsed Joe Biden.

With that, Biden won South Carolina, and in short order, every key Southern politician came out in endorsement of Biden. Biden swept the South and is now viewed as the presumptive nominee.

The Southern strategy is a formula for political power that no politician dare ignore. But two can play at that game. The impoverished and oppressed new class being thrown out of any place in the capitalist economy makes up a bigger share of the population in the South than in any other region.

Thousands of revolutionaries, propelled by this class, have no recourse but to fight for access to the vital needs of food, shelter, clean water, education, and healthcare. Many of these revolutionaries found themselves in the Sanders campaign in what they saw as a vehicle to make the fight to obtain their demands. Many more are making that fight on fronts across the country, and that is certainly the case in the South. Whether it is understood fully or not, they are all engaged in a fight for the political power to obtain their basic needs.

The formula for political power for the ruling class has been a divided working class, first in the South and then for the entire country. The formula for political power for the working class is a class united around a common program to reconstruct society in its own interests. Only then will the formula for political power work in our favor. **RC**

**1:10 - 1:30 The question of Democracy (discussion of definition of Democracy)**

**Democracy:** The American people have a long history of fighting for the ideal of democracy, of rule by “we the people.” Democracy is more than the right to vote. Economic democracy is the guarantee of a decent life for everyone: a quality home, education, and health care, plus more. There can’t be political democracy without economic democracy. In a society based on slavery, (ancient Greece) only the slaveowners have democracy. In a society based on an economy of wage-slavery only those who own the means of subsistence have access to democratic rights. Whoever controls your bread and butter controls you.

“Bourgeois democracy” allowed for certain rights and an illusion of fairness. Housing, food, medical care were always sold for profit; however, a majority of workers were able - through selling their labor - to buy these basic things. This kept the system going and ensured a measure of social peace.

Today, electronic production is eliminating workers, and the rulers can't allow the poor to assemble or express any semblance of independent demands. History has shown that if voting or free speech stands in the way of the corporations' property and profits, they will eliminate it altogether. Today we are seeing the rise of fascism—the takeover of the government by the corporations. The Supreme Court and the Citizens United decisions have given the rights of citizens to corporations—‘corporate personhood.’ Militarized police forces act as occupying troops in poor neighborhoods, where they kill at will. The criminalization of the poor and dispossessed - from the various laws against homeless people’s acts of survival, to the rise of the privatized prison industry that profits on slave labor - all represent this move toward a fascist police state.

True and universal democracy can only exist in a society where people have full economic and political rights, based on public ownership of production and distribution— “to each according to need” — not for the private profit of the few. Democracy, in the final analysis is rule by the people. Only with an economic system that no longer depends on exploitation can we fulfill the promise of democracy—a cooperative society based on distribution ‘according to need,’ collective control over the necessities of life. The struggle for reform and for democracy is now in reality a revolutionary one — to remake society along cooperative and truly democratic lines.

## **Background reading on Southern Strategy:**

### **Understanding the Southern Strategy**

Understanding the Southern Strategy requires going beyond simply looking at the horrors, the immorality, the injustice of



racism; it's all of those, but they're reflections – tactics of a strategy of class control known as White Supremacy. Racist ideas did not cause White Supremacy, rather the other way around; White Supremacy is a strategic doctrine, developed to solve the problem of united rebellions by black and white workers by dividing them along color lines;

“America evolved as a country with a tiny, super-wealthy white ruling class, a vast mass of rebellious poor white workers and farmers, as well as a population of black slaves concentrated in the South. What was the inevitable politics that arose from this? It was the control of the poor whites that was the overall issue, not the control of the blacks, who were already held down by the gun and the lash. But the poor whites could not be controlled without the utilization of the boogeyman of a black “race.” This racist conception was developed not to control the blacks but to control the whites.” LRNA educational 2015

This has made the Southern Strategy successful since the defeat of Reconstruction. Divide the working class in the South, and every Southern state can be dominated by reactionary, even fascist politicians; at first Dixiecrats, these days Republicans, who always get to sit on key committees in Congress. Make it clear to Northern labor that the only way to get labor-friendly legislation is through a united Democratic Party tied to the South, and labor will settle for what compromises it can get rather than risk a campaign that divides the Party and loses to “the greater of two evils”.

### **Questions for discussion;**

1. What strategy can the working class use to win the fight for a true democracy, that guarantees the basic needs of all people are equally and fully met?