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In racist, anti-immigrant diatribe, Trump declares, “I am a nationalist”

President Donald Trump delivered a fascistic anti-immigrant diatribe at a campaign appearance in Houston on Monday for incumbent Republican Senator Ted Cruz.

Amid xenophobic slurs against the thousands of impoverished Central American workers in the caravan making its way through Mexico to the US border, and against immigrants in general, Trump denounced the Democratic Party as “globalists” and declared, “I am a nationalist.”

To chants of “USA! USA!” from the crowd of 18,000 supporters packed into the Toyota Center sports palladium, he urged his audience to “use that word [nationalist].”

In a series of recent campaign speeches in the run-up to the November 6 mid-term elections, Trump has seized on the Central American caravan to step up his appeal to fascistic elements in the Republican base by promoting chauvinism and animus against foreigners. His calculations and those of far-right advisers such as speech writer Stephen Miller, former White House aide Stephen Bannon and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich extend beyond the upcoming elections. They are seeking to create the foundations for a fascist movement in the US.

Trump and company are exploiting the cowardice, duplicity and right-wing orientation of their nominal opponents in the Democratic Party. The Democrats’ response to Trump’s pogromist anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies is to run as far away as possible from any defense of the rights of immigrants or democratic rights more broadly.

In his speech, Trump charged the Democrats with promoting the caravan, which he called “an assault on our country.” He painted so-called “illegal immigration” as an invasion that threatens to destroy “your neighborhoods, your hospitals, your schools... and bankrupt our country.”

Absurdly branding the Democrats as “socialists,” he declared: “The Democrats would rather destroy American communities than defend America’s borders... The Democrat Party is openly encouraging millions of illegal aliens to break our laws, violate our borders and overwhelm our nation...The Democrats have launched an assault on the sovereignty of our country, the security of our nation and the safety of every single American.”

Going even further in the direction of fascist demagoguery, he cast the election as part of a twilight struggle against enemies of the American people, declaring: “Radical Democrats want to turn the clock back and restore power to corrupt, power-hungry globalists... They have a word... It’s called a ‘nationalist’... We’re not supposed to use that word. You know what I am. I’m a nationalist.”

Trump used lies about “illegal aliens” voting en masse to demand voter ID laws in every state, boasted of the supposed strength of the US economy and the “success” of his tax cut for the rich, praised the newly confirmed far-right Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, and hailed the “great people” in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the border police.

That Trump is no aberration, but rather an expression of the crisis and decay of the entire political and economic system and the collapse of bourgeois democratic forms of rule, was underscored by the response of the mainstream media and the Democrats to the Houston speech.

Not one major media outlet characterized the speech for what it was: a fascistic rant. The Democratic-aligned media and the Democratic Party limited themselves to complaining that Trump was spreading lies, above all the claim that the Democrats are supporting the caravan and open borders. The Democrats took pains to distance themselves from any genuinely humane and democratic immigration policy.

The *New York Times* wrote in a front-page story: “Republicans... are now linking mainstream Democrats who support immigration reforms to far-left activists who favor abolishing the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency... Democratic candidates have tended to downplay immigration as a theme, focusing instead on a small number of kitchen-table issues, chiefly health care.”

The *Washington Post* cited Leon Fresco, an immigration attorney and former aide to Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, as saying that Democrats were “concerned that showing too much empathy for the migrants could turn off more conservative voters.” The *Post* continued: “‘People who are swing voters are not comfortable with politicians defending people in the caravan,’ he said.”

CNN commentator Chris Cillizza wrote lamely that Trump’s embrace of the nationalist label “speaks volumes about his lack of understanding that the presidency isn’t just a job but a beacon of moral leadership both in the country and in the world.”

In his speech, Trump denounced Cruz’s Democratic challenger for the contested Senate seat, Representative Beto O’Rourke, as a “radical open borders left-winger.” *USA Today* reported that O’Rourke did not respond to its request for a comment on the rally.

Texas Democratic Party Chairman Gilberto Hinojosa carefully avoided any comment on the caravan, the rights of immigrants or Trump’s invocation of American nationalism, saying merely, “Texans don’t want shameless rubber stamps for Trump’s dangerously out-of-touch and reckless agenda. We won’t let Trump distract us.”

New York Democratic Congressman Gregory Meeks told CNN on Tuesday that Trump’s adoption of the “nationalist” brand “reminds me of the kinds of words that came from people like Hitler.” However, he hastened to add that he saw no parallel between Trump’s words and Hitler’s actions, and ended up respectfully advising the president to be “very cautious” about his choice of language.

At a rally in Nevada on Monday, Barack Obama, whose administration deported more immigrants than any other, chastised the Republicans for appealing to “tribe” and seeking to “pit one group against the other.”

There is mass popular opposition to Trump’s policies of war, anti-immigrant chauvinism, authoritarianism and austerity. But it can find no expression within the two-party system dominated by the American corporate-financial oligarchy. The Democrats are neither willing nor able to make an appeal to the broad discontent and opposition in the working class. They ignore the central social and class issues that concern the broad majority of the population, centered on the immense growth of social inequality.

They represent another entirely reactionary faction of the same ruling class. Their constituency is Wall Street, the national security agencies and privileged layers of the middle class.

The Democrats are carrying out a right-wing campaign in the elections based on identity politics, focused on the #MeToo sexual abuse witch hunt, demands for a more aggressive

posture against Syria and Russia, and stepped up internet censorship on the pretext of combating “fake news.” This is combined with fraudulent and empty promises to defend healthcare, which the Democrats, should they win control of the House of Representatives, would do nothing to implement.

The promotion of nationalism and police state measures directed, in the first instance, against immigrants is driven by the insoluble crisis of American capitalism and the growth of the class struggle, which the ruling class is preparing to meet with state violence.

Trump’s speech must be taken by the working class as a warning. It points up the urgent need to break with the Democrats and the entire two-party system and build the Socialist Equality Party as the leadership of a mass socialist movement.