

Black Lives Matter's DeRay Mckesson endorses Hillary Clinton

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Black Lives Matter spokesman DeRay Mckesson published an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* last week headlined “Why I’m voting for Hillary Clinton.”

Mckesson’s endorsement came several days after he and his Black Lives Matter colleague Brittany Packnett met privately with Clinton in Cleveland. Packnett endorsed Clinton following the meeting in an interview published in *Elle*. The two had previously met with Clinton a year prior.

Mckesson, in particular, has been promoted by the Democratic Party establishment and the media as the voice of African-American opposition to police violence and racism. He is a fairly frequent visitor to the Obama White House.

It is significant that Mckesson begins his article with a deferential reference to Shirley Chisholm, one of the early black politicians who secured a place within the political establishment. As a Democratic New York State legislator and then a member of the US House of Representatives from New York City from 1969 to 1983, Chisholm distinguished herself as a thoroughly conventional bourgeois politician. She was careful to distance herself from the more radical factions of the civil rights movement.

“The next president will continue to shape the trajectory of justice and landscape of opportunity in this country,” Mckesson writes. “She will be responsible for how trillions of dollars in federal funding are spent, decide how to ensure both liberty and security in an increasingly interconnected world and determine the path forward on health care and Social Security.”

Mckesson’s choice of words is telling, particularly the phrase “ensure both liberty and security.” This is one of those catch phrases used by capitalist politicians and think tanks to denote the violent and criminal policies pursued by American imperialism to defend the global interests of the US corporate elite. On this score, Mckesson’s choice

for president has a long and unambiguous record: from supporting the invasion and occupation of Iraq to leading the drive for the US regime-change operations in Libya and Syria—illegal and criminal operations that killed many hundreds of thousands of people and destroyed entire countries.

Clinton has as well played a leading role in the anti-Chinese “pivot to Asia” and is running an election campaign based largely on the demonization of Russia. She calls for the establishment of a “no-fly zone” in Syria, having acknowledged in a 2013 speech to Goldman Sachs that such a move would result in heavy civilian casualties.

Mckesson notes in his article a few disagreements with Clinton, such as her support for capital punishment. Military aggression and war are not mentioned.

Nor is Clinton’s opposition to any government jobs program, her support for Obama’s assault on health care under “Obamacare,” or her denunciations of Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden.

One looks in vain in his piece for the words “poverty,” “inequality,” “Wall Street” or “capitalism.”

“Clinton has the plan to move America forward,” he writes, adding, “There is much work that lies ahead, and Clinton is ready and prepared to do the hard work.”

He praises Clinton’s \$125 billion Economic Revitalization Initiative, describing it as “akin to a new New Deal, structurally investing in youth employment, re-entry, small business growth and homeownership.”

There is nothing progressive about this scheme. Like similar measures enacted by Obama and his Republican predecessors, it is based on the use of taxpayer money to provide tax incentives and other financial inducements for businesses to set up operations and hire workers at near-poverty wages. It is a continuation of the drive to turn the United States into a new low-wage center, where corporations can make fatter profits by “insourcing” jobs

from overseas.

Mckesson and others in the leadership of Black Lives Matter are enthusiastic backers of the plan because it promises to provide black capitalists with a share of the spoils.

At one point he writes, “Trump is placing a bet that America can be fooled into thinking its greatness lies behind it—that restricting immigration and the rights of religious minorities and ending social welfare programs are things to be celebrated, as they have been in the worst moments of our history.”

There are three notable things about this passage. First, it ignores the fact that it was the Democratic Party under Bill Clinton, supported by First Lady Hillary, which acted to “end welfare as we know it.”

Second, it overlooks the fact that the Obama administration has overseen the biggest wave of deportations in US history. By the beginning of 2016, Obama had deported over 2.5 million people—23 percent more than George W. Bush deported over the course of his entire eight-year term.

Third, like Obama and Clinton, Mckesson takes issue with Trump’s claim that America is not “great.” Like most of his upper-middle class milieu, he is complacent, self-satisfied and indifferent to the plight of tens of millions of Americans who have suffered through layoffs, pay cuts, soaring housing prices, and the gutting of social programs, health care and pensions.

Mckesson, aged 31, is the district chief of human capital for the Baltimore city school district, where he makes \$165,000 a year. This is about \$50,000 more than what is required to be in the top 1 percent of Millennials. He lives in a world apart from the majority of Americans—black or white. He is “upwardly mobile,” and sees a Clinton administration as a springboard to bigger and better things to come.

Just this past Sunday, *Adweek*, an advertising industry newspaper, published an interview in which Mckesson bragged about his personal friendship with Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. “Jack’s a friend. I love Twitter. We talk about the platform, and we get to bounce ideas off each other,” he enthused. He also managed to get in a good word for Patagonia vests, noting that the firm’s CEO “emailed me when I got arrested in Baton Rouge.” He added, “They have been great about repairing my vest every time it rips and they have to restuff the down.”

Why has this crass and ignorant nobody been so heavily promoted? Why are his banal political opinions featured prominently by the *Washington Post* and similar

publications?

There are two basic reasons. First, his insistence that race is the end-all and be-all of American life, and his characterization of American society as inherently and incorrigibly racist. Racial and sectarian politics have, from the earliest stirrings of American industrial workers in the 19th century, served as a political ideological weapon of the capitalist class to divide the working class.

In the current election cycle, the ruling elite was stunned by the support that emerged for the campaign of Bernie Sanders, not because it had concerns over Sanders’ own political allegiance, but because masses of workers and youth responded on a *class basis* to Sanders’ claim to be a socialist and his call for a “political revolution” against economic inequality and Wall Street domination. The promotion of Black Lives Matter and other purveyors of racial politics, as well as proponents of other forms of middle class identity politics, was seen as a much needed counterweight.

Racial and identity politics have, in fact, been at the center of the Clinton campaign and, to a great extent, bourgeois rule as a whole in the United States.

Second, the ruling class is very aware of the need to groom and promote a new generation of black Democratic “leaders” to keep the masses of African-American workers and youth in check. It knows that Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and company are spent forces.

Mckesson is eager and willing to fill the role. Careerism, self-promotion, the quest for a bigger share of the spoils of capitalism—such are the *class* concerns that drive the mainly upper-middle class figures who dominate groups such as Black Lives Matter.

Which is why the Ford Foundation is investing \$100 million in organizations linked to Mckesson and Black Lives Matter.



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