

Democratic Socialists of America on LA City Council seek to smother opposition to attacks on immigrants

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On Tuesday, Los Angeles City Council member Hugo Soto-Martínez, a prominent member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), introduced a set of proposals ostensibly aimed at protecting immigrants from President Trump's draconian immigration crackdown.

The proposals would mandate businesses to report federal immigration enforcement actions, launch a "know your rights" campaign, and provide temporary funding for immigrant legal services.

Los Angeles County is home to 10 million people. More than 60 percent are either foreign-born or have at least one immigrant parent. Approximately 800,000 are undocumented.

While Soto-Martínez framed these proposals as progressive and compassionate, they are nothing more than a cynical ploy to immobilize genuine working class opposition and channel it into the dead-end politics of the Democratic Party, leaving immigrant workers entirely vulnerable to the state.

Soto-Martínez and his DSA colleagues are complicit in perpetuating the very system they claim to oppose. The City Council initiative serves as a smokescreen, allowing the Democratic Party and its DSA allies to posture as defenders of immigrants while continuing to facilitate the deportations and serve the interests of big business.

The DSA, under the leadership of figures like Soto-Martínez, has consistently used issues like immigration, homelessness and hyper-exploitation to divert working class anger into safe, reformist channels controlled by the Democratic Party. By focusing on symbolic gestures and legalistic reforms, the DSA City Council members seek to smother the potential for an

independent working class movement that could challenge the capitalist system. Their proposals are carefully crafted to avoid any confrontation with the financial and political elites who benefit from the exploitation of immigrant labor.

Soto-Martínez's proposed requirement for businesses to report federal immigration enforcement actions is a toothless measure that does nothing to hold employers accountable for their role in exploiting undocumented workers. Nor does it shield immigrants from federal raids.

The same applies to the "know your rights" campaign. His proposal for funding legal services is a mere \$540,000—a drop in the bucket—to finance immigration legal services for just three months following the freezing of federal support.

These measures are designed to placate public outrage while preserving the basic framework of alleged "illegality" of migrants and maintaining the profits of corporations that rely on cheap immigrant labor.

While Soto-Martínez and his colleagues loudly denounce Trump's anti-immigrant policies, they remain conspicuously silent when a Democratic administration carries out similar actions. It was the Democratic Party that banned asylum, expanded immigrant detention and deported 1.5 million people under Biden. The DSA's true role is that of a loyal appendage of the Democratic Party, rather than a genuine advocate for immigrants' rights.

"This legislation sends a clear message: Los Angeles will not be complicit in Trump's dehumanizing agenda," Soto-Martínez stated. "We will fight back and protect our community."

This is contradicted by the DSA's silence on President Joe Biden's immigration policies, including raids in California at the beginning of January. Until the end, Biden led one of the most brutal administrations, deporting record numbers. The heavy-handed arrest of 78 workers in California between January 7 and January 9 was one of the final acts of a Democratic administration that paved the way to Trump, while the DSA supported the Democratic anti-immigrant candidate Kamala Harris.

On every measure, DSA Council members like Soto-Martínez have either voted in favor of big business or taken ambiguous positions that allow corporate interests to prevail. Their proposals are calibrated to avoid any challenge to the capitalist system, ensuring that the wealthy elite retains its grip on power, while DSA members like Soto-Martínez collect a salary of \$218,000 a year, the highest city council pay in the country.

The DSA's promotion of sanctuary city policies is another example of its fraudulent politics. While these policies are presented as a bold stand against Trump's anti-immigrant agenda, they do nothing to address the underlying issues of poverty, inequality and exploitation that immigrants face. Sanctuary city laws, such as the one signed by Mayor Karen Bass in December, are designed to create the illusion of resistance while leaving the social and legal framework of repression intact.

In reality, these policies serve the interests of big business by ensuring a steady supply of cheap labor. By refusing to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement, sanctuary cities like Los Angeles help employers continue exploiting undocumented workers without fear of disruption. At the same time, these policies will do nothing to protect immigrants from deportation.

One of the most insidious aspects of the DSA's proposals is their potential to compile data on immigrant workers, much like Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. While DACA was initially presented as a compassionate measure to protect young immigrants, it also created a registry of undocumented individuals that could be used to persecute them by future administrations. That registry is now in the hands of the Trump administration, which can directly target

immigrants for deportation.

The DSA's proposals, which include requiring businesses to report federal immigration enforcement actions and provide funding for legal services, could similarly create a database of immigrant workers to be used against them in the future. By failing to address the dangers of such data collection, Soto-Martínez and his colleagues are putting immigrant communities at risk while presenting themselves as their defenders.

Immigration is not merely a national issue but an international one, rooted in the global capitalist system that attacks workers through war, poverty, and climate change. The working class in the United States, including both native-born and documented immigrant workers, has a direct interest in standing in solidarity with undocumented immigrants. The exploitation of immigrant labor drives down wages and working conditions for all workers, creating a race to the bottom that benefits only the capitalist class.

Workers in the US and around the world are expressing their disgust at the inhumane treatment of immigrants, including deportations and the erection of internment camps. From protests in Europe against the detention of refugees to demonstrations in Latin America condemning US immigration policies, the global working class has shown its willingness to fight for the rights of immigrants. This international solidarity is the only genuine basis for change, as it recognizes that the struggle against capitalism and imperialism is a global one.

To truly address the challenges faced by immigrants and workers in general, a fundamental shift in approach is necessary. The working class must reject the fraudulent politics of the DSA and the Democratic Party and build an independent movement capable of challenging the capitalist system. Only through such a movement, rooted in international solidarity and the unity of workers across borders, can workers achieve true social rights and equality for immigrants and natives alike.



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