The 2016 Bernie Sanders Campaign: American Socialist Populism

Judson C. Abraham
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

The 2016 Bernie Sanders Campaign: American Socialist Populism

Judson C. Abraham, *Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*

Some socialists criticize Bernie Sanders's 2016 presidential campaign, taking issue with the senator's nationalism, vague presentation of socialism and revolution, and seeming preoccupation with class at the expense of attention to racism. This article draws from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theorization of populism to depict Sanders's campaign as a legitimately socialist project. Laclau and Mouffe claim that left populism may evolve into socialism under certain conditions. One may expect Sanders's populism to empower previously uncommitted people to make socialist demands. Keywords: populism, democratic socialism, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Bernie Sanders.

Although the Vermont senator and democratic socialist Bernie Sanders energized scores of American progressives with his 2016 campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, leftist commentators frequently criticized Sanders's presidential bid. At the time, some socialists accused Sanders of appealing to shallow nationalism with his patriotic rhetoric and protectionist trade policies, presenting an economic reductionist explanation of racism, and failing to advocate genuine revolutionary socialism. This paper draws from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theorization of left populism to explain how the 2016 Sanders campaign's democratic socialism, despite its conceptual vagueness, was quite relevant to contemporary progressives' most far-reaching aspirations. First, I argue that the senator's rhetorical nationalism and conflation of economic inequality and racial injustice, which Sanders's left-wing detractors found distasteful, correspond to a kind of socialism – socialist populism. Secondly, I argue that Sanders's populistic language about democratic socialism may advance longstanding left-wing goals by opening more Americans to economic policy that breaks with conventional property relations. With Laclau and Mouffe's insights, one may understand how Sanders's vagueness about democratic socialism served a constructive purpose: the candidate was using populist rhetoric in an experimental way in hopes of developing a culturally appropriate socialist politics for the U.S.

Borrowing from Laclau and Mouffe, I explain that socialist populism does two things: it redraws political identities and revives democracy. Populism redraws political identities by framing politics as an ongoing conflict between the people and the elite and equating the struggles of diverse subsets of the population. Populism revives democracy by provoking

robust confrontation between well-defined, oppositional political projects and multiplying the issues open to democratic intervention. Socialist populism forges social solidarity and invigorates democratic participation to such a grand extent that people independently begin to agitate for social control of production. Sanders's 2016 populist campaign broached socialist populism because it sought to inspire democratic agitation for increasingly radical social control. As I explain how the candidate's rhetoric dovetailed with socialist populism, I will question accusations that the senator's 2016 campaign expressed uncritical nationalism, shallow class reductionism, and opportunistic faux socialism. Sanders's populist presentation of American politics as a struggle between the people and the elite appealed to progressive nationalism by reclaiming the international socialist tradition and egalitarianism as part of the American identity. His discursive construction of the people drew a chain of equivalence between class issues and racial issues, which, rather than reducing race to class, illustrated how democratic citizenship mutually advances both racial and class struggles. Although Sanders has not called for the direct overthrow of capitalism or government seizure of key industries, his invocations of economic democracy paralleled Laclau and Mouffe's conception of socialism as radical democracy. His appeals to economic democratization aimed to open the public's imagination to economic policies that challenge managerial prerogatives.

Socialist Criticisms of the Sanders Campaign

Socialists accused Sanders's 2016 campaign of espousing nationalistic trade policy, patriotic rhetoric, class reductionism, and vague definitions of revolution and socialism. Several leftist writers insisted that Sanders's trade policies replicate the narrow nationalism of conservative isolationists by failing to back the foreign workers most harmed by free trade agreements like NAFTA. These critics claimed that Sanders seldom expresses support for strikes or higher wages in the developing world (McKean 2016; Yates 2016) and seems instead to have "abandoned [Eugene] Debs's internationalism for a nationalist focus on U.S. workers" (Smith, A., 2015, 143). Other socialists suggested that Sanders's nationalist viewpoint prevents him from adequately supporting the victims of U.S. militarism. Sanders's anti-war messages have often revolved around bread and butter issues without thoughtfully addressing the nature of U.S. imperialism or calling for class internationalism (Martin 2016). The anti-war historian Rick Perlstein (2015) accused Sanders of appealing to nationalistic militarism by tweeting an image of the POW/MIA flag. It is unfair to suggest that Sanders never conveys internationalism: he praised a minimum wage increase in Bangladesh (Sanders 2011, 180), protested NAFTA by visiting Mexican labor organizers, and supported the Sandinista Revolution (Sanders and Gutman 2015, 80-85 and 225). With that being said, the critics did have a point. The Vermonter's 2016 campaign did not lay out a comprehensive plan for opposing free trade without harming foreign workers (see Gilbert 2016) and Sanders has an unfortunate history of disappointing anti-war activists (Jaffe 2015, 158).

The 2016 Sanders campaign's language about the economic roots of racism failed to impress every socialist. Some left intellectuals claimed the Sanders campaign failed to foreground racial injustice. Critics say the campaign's proposals to address problems facing black communities with job creation programs presented racial injustice as a direct outcome of economic inequality (e.g. Fletcher 2016). Angela Davis was among the most prominent

and eloquent critics of Sanders on this score. In an interview with Amy Goodman, Davis said that Sanders:

> engages in a kind of economic reductionism that prevents him from speaking…in ways that enlighten us about the persistence of racism, racist violence, state violence…It seems that he does not have the vocabulary that allows him to acknowledge the role and the influence that racism has played historically. He thinks that economic justice will automatically lead us to racial justice (2016a).

There is truth to Davis's critique. James Baldwin's critique of the Henry Wallace campaign reveals that white American social democrats sometimes overlook the specificity of black struggles and their own racial blind spots while incorrectly assuming that their plans for entitlement expansion will resolve racism (1955, 73-84). Unfortunately for Sanders and the left in general, the Clinton campaign seized upon elements of this argument in a ham-fisted and cynical fashion (see Weigel 2016) that may obscure more nuanced interpretations of Sanders's racial politics.

Along these lines, the candidate's decision to describe his campaign activity as part of a "political revolution" (Sanders 2016) peeved some socialists. Opinion pieces in *Socialist Worker* argued that Sanders distorts the very meaning of revolution, reducing it to opportunistic and "bogus rhetoric" (Katch 2016). Sanders has conceptualized his "political revolution" as a call for a broad-based coalition of average citizens to enter electoral politics, gain progressive control over public offices at every level throughout the country, and push American politics to the left (Nichols 2015). To Sanders's critics, this depiction of revolution was at best narrow localism and at worst a cynical public relations campaign for the Democratic Party, doing little to serve mass movements oriented toward direct action or promote popular control of the economy. It goes without saying that Sanders's presentation of revolution was quite different from historical violent revolutions like the French, Hattian, and Russian revolutions (Nichols 2015).

Finally, Sanders's critics said he diluted the concept of socialism by presenting left-liberalism and/or social democracy as socialism. Sanders disavows seizure of the means of production as a goal for his revolution and has hazily defined his socialism as a belief "that the middle class and the working families who produce the wealth of America deserve a decent standard of living and that their incomes should go up, not down" (qtd. Jaffe 2015, 173). Yates (2016) writes that Sanders has said little about standard socialist demands like a proletarian revolution, the end of capitalist property relations, democratic control of production, social ownership of wealth, or a guaranteed minimum income. Even Sanders's sympathizer Harry Jaffe claimed that Sanders is not a socialist at all, but rather a populist or just a very progressive liberal (2015, 173-174).

But what if socialism and populism are not separate categories? Ernesto Laclau argues that all successful socialist projects require populist mobilization and that even populist projects that do not appear at first glance to resemble socialism may come to advance socialism. Laclau believes that all socialism requires deep rootedness in national political culture and that political relations vary dramatically from country to country.

Sophisticated socialists use populism as a tool to integrate their politics with local conditions and values. Mature socialist projects will look dramatically different in different places. It is thus useless to apply a cookie-cutter definition of socialism across various countries and historical moments. Movements that appear, from the outside, as anti-intellectual, ideologically incoherent, or opportunistic often contain a radically egalitarian energy and evolve in socialist directions over time. Populism draws people into radical politics and, even if many populists do not begin by espousing recognizably socialist politics, all populist mobilizations will eventually snowball into socialist demands for popular control of the economy *unless* right-wing populists co-opt them. The only things that make populism turn right-wing are racism and/or technocracy (Laclau 1979, 158, 165, 173-174, and 196-198). In what follows, I argue that the 2016 campaign used populism in an experimental attempt to develop a form of socialism most appropriate for contemporary, American political culture and open Americans' minds to robust, interventionist economic policies that challenge conventional property relations.

Laclau and Mouffe on Left Populism

Laclau and Mouffe say populism has two main functions. Populism is, first, a way for political actors to redraw the frontiers of political relations by uniting as many people as possible against the elite establishment and, second, a way to reenergize and deepen democracy. Populist political projects redraw political frontiers by establishing hegemony over many diverse actors throughout complex societies. This process involves reclaiming popular issues and political symbolism and associating them with the demands of many different subjects and interest groups at once. In so doing, populists establish a new revolutionary subjectivity by forging equivalence chains linking many different groups together as one people. Populism regenerates democracy by inciting political passion and extending the reach of democratic politics beyond the public sphere's traditional boundaries. Populist political projects become increasingly necessary as leftists respond to the social complexity of advanced capitalism.

Before covering how and why populism redraws political frontlines and resuscitates democracy, I must briefly touch upon Laclau and Mouffe's thoughts on capitalism and the revolutionary subject. Orthodox Marxism presents capitalism as a mode of production marked by wage labor and industrial production. This orthodoxy holds that capitalism will inevitably develop to the point in which an industrial working class is large and geographically concentrated enough to have immediately shared, recognizable political and economic interests. This mature, homogenized proletariat will have the ability to act as an independent, revolutionary subject to seize political power and recreate society (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 72-75). Laclau and Mouffe reject the orthodox view because advanced capitalism spreads social complexity, not social standardization. Laclau thinks that capitalism is not strictly a mode of production, but rather a complex, global array of interlocking economic, military, and political strategies. Capitalism, especially as it exists in the post-industrial West, does not rely on masses of factory workers with shared economic and political interests. It requires many different kinds of people, with many conflicting interests, to do its bidding (Laclau 2005a, 230-231; Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 159-160).

Some politicians, activists, and intellectuals respond to the increasing complexity of capitalism by abandoning long-standing left formations, such as mass left-wing political parties embedded in the labor movement, on the basis that traditional left practices and ideology are irrelevant for countries without a clearly defined working class and a homogenous manufacturing base (Laclau 2005a, 85). Center-left democrats abandon old-fashioned left parties and discourses in favor of milquetoast "third way" centrism. Anarchists may abandon left parties in favor of a politics based exclusively in civil society activism (Mouffe 2013, 119 and 135). Laclau and Mouffe respond to the fragmentation of class identities in the opposite fashion. Although there can be no singular revolutionary actor based in production, Laclau and Mouffe say that the left must retain centralized, long-standing, stable institutions like mass parties to engage in the long- term process of discursively constructing a new left-wing identity.[1] People will not immediately imagine themselves as part of a new revolutionary subject; they need to learn how to think of themselves this way by interacting with stable political institutions over the long term. This new revolutionary subject is the people. Populism is the process of uniting a very diverse set of groups displaced by globalized capitalism with contradictory interests under a common identity as the people (Laclau 2005a, 223-232).

The people is not a preexisting force that politicians may awaken at will. The people is an imaginary category that political actors recreate in new contexts. Populists use floating signifiers, empty signifiers, and equivalence chains to establish the people. Floating signifiers are symbols and/or issues with no inherent ideological meaning that people vaguely associate with rebellion. These issues and symbols appeal to a broad cross-section of the public, including many people who identify as left-wing and others who identify as right-wing. Empty signifiers (which often overlap with floating signifiers) are singular issues and/or symbols that can represent many other issues and causes at once. Empty signifiers are the "tip of the iceberg." Equivalence chains are broad coalitions of people who imagine their struggles as immediately linked, such that the victory of one struggle advances several other struggles at once. Left populists form expansive equivalence chains that unite a broad section of people by appealing to empty signifiers and floating signifiers to give popular causes a leftist connotation (see Laclau 2005b). This process redraws political divisions in society around new fault lines. Although left populism maintains and reinforces the division between the left and the right, it transforms what one associates with the left and the right: a "vibrant democratic politics can no longer be conceived in terms of the traditional left-right axis" (Mouffe 2016).

Although left populism reinterprets popular symbols and issues to appeal to people who are otherwise right-wing, it is not non-partisan. Populism is a deeply partisan process that forms a people in opposition to an elite. Forging broad equivalence chains requires uniting as many people as possible in opposition to a narrowly defined enemy. Politics

---

[1] Laclau and Mouffe do not reject civil society activity and they have enthusiastically supported Occupy and the alter-globalization movement. Mouffe wants these movements to act synergistically with left parties, much as Syriza and Podemos have drawn energy from the Syntagma Square and *Indignados* protest movements.

involves "we vs. they" thinking and passionate, angry denunciations of opponents. In healthy, pluralist democracies, political parties compete for votes by developing well-defined, oppositional platforms and identities. However, in contemporary society, mainstream left and right-wing parties have forged a consensus around neoliberal economic projects. The left and right are now indistinguishable in the eyes of many disaffected voters. It is up to populists to restore passionate, polarizing conflict to democracy by appealing to the people in opposition to the corrupt elite (Mouffe 2005b). Doing so will encourage the public to reimagine themselves as the people and, in so doing, begin to create a new left-wing subjectivity to replace the international proletariat as the revolutionary subject (see Laclau 2014, 172-176).

The project of congealing a new identity of the people around a set of popular empty and floating signifiers does not happen overnight and does not require reinventing the wheel. It involves long-term work within the state and appeals to existing political traditions. Left populism involves radical democracy, which entails the constant expansion of the democratic state into more areas of social life, the proliferation of platforms for democratic decision making, and the creation of a new equivalential identity based on a shared identity of citizenship. Laclau and Mouffe embrace the welfare state and want to extend it, deepen it, and democratize it. They want to redraw the old division between the public and private spheres so that democratic decision-making and issue-formation may occur in so-called private realms like the family and the economy (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 140-141 and 160-168). This extension of democracy into new territory need not require invasive state or party absorption of these fields. It may involve heightened synergy between political parties and protest movements focusing on economic and social issues (Mouffe, interviewed by Hackl 2014). Under radical democracy, various social groups relate to each other through the political tradition of democratic citizenship, which allows them to maintain a healthy degree of tension between solidarity and autonomy without sacrificing solidarity to autonomy. If left populists draw from the tradition of citizenship to equate the demands of racial minorities, feminists, environmentalists, and labor movements (despite the fact that these demands may not always harmonize), then people will consider all of these groups' struggles relevant to democracy. Thus, a victory for each of these social groups will be a victory for all of them because each demand will advance the shared cause of democracy (Mouffe 1993, 18-20 and 70-72). Finally, Mouffe (2009) stresses that radical democracy occurs within and around the democratic state through a drawn-out process of identity formation and state consolidation comparable to Gramsci's war of position. We have thus seen that left populism responds to advanced capitalism's fragmentation and dispersion of social identities to form a new unified identity of "the people" by working within the state to polarize society, deepen and expand democracy, and forge a new equivalence that redraws the left around popular issues and symbols.

Sanders's Nationalism as Left Populism

Political actors establish populist discourses to forge unity among broad swaths of society that cannot necessarily connect through any shared relationship to the means of production. In order to establish this broad unity and construct the people, populists frequently highlight popular issues and national symbolism with cross-class appeal. In *Politics*

and Ideology in Marxist Theory, Laclau explains that the inter-war German left failed to stem the rise of Nazism because both communists and social democrats refused to reach out to the middle class in any meaningful way. The left rejected patriotism as bourgeois, which led some socialists to do asinine things like express support for the Treaty of Versailles. The German left's class analysis was so rigid that many of them refused to take up popular issues, such as the declining living standards of white-collar professionals, because these were not strictly working class issues.

Laclau uses this history to suggest that the best way to fight the far right and gain left-wing institutional power is to forge cross-class alliances through a left populist embrace of national dignity and attractive cultural symbolism. He objects to the idea that certain issues or symbols have an inherent class nature. The political meaning of an issue depends not on its content, but rather on which class hegemonizes the struggle over the issue's implementation (Laclau 1979, 92-100; 113-114; 124-129; 162). If the bourgeoisie imbues national symbolism and popular issues with a bourgeois connotation, then nationalism will be conservative. If the proletariat imbues national symbolism and popular issues with a working class connotation, then nationalism will be progressive.

Hence, it is entirely possible and even necessary for left populists to draw from nationalist symbolism and lay claim to issues with broad national appeal, even if these same issues resonate with people who do not consistently identify with the left. Take Sanders's decision to tweet an image of the POW/MIA flag, which Perlstein found distasteful. Sanders embraces national symbolism because it unifies a broad group of people, including military veterans, whose interests the left cannot afford to abandon to the right. Sanders strives to bestow patriotism with a left-wing connotation. Sanders appeals to historical figures like Eugene V. Debs, Emma Goldman, and Mother Jones to show that his socialism is part of a grand American radical tradition. His left nationalism depicts economic justice as compatible with the inherent egalitarianism of the American spirit and the voting public's true wishes (Foster 2016; Sanders and Gutman 2015, 20 and 27). His decision to embrace certain nationalistic themes, such as the middle class's wellbeing, veterans' issues, and the symbolism that accompanies these issues is a left populism compatible with socialist politics.

Much like his appeals to military symbols, Sanders's statements about globalization irked a few internationalists. Reflecting on Sanders's critiques of global trade during the 2016 campaign cycle, Tobita Chow (2018) regrets that Sanders usually fell "short of full-throated solidarity with Chinese workers" and did not advocate for a global minimum wage and technology transfers. While I share Chow's frustration with American political discourse's tendency to oversimplify trade policy, I find that Mouffe's work lends itself to a more charitable reading of the senator's rhetoric. Mouffe sympathizes with alter-globalist development policies like those Chow advocates. However, she is wary of cosmopolitanism and urges activists to ground global justice in efforts to build the democratic capacities of the nation state. Mouffe claims that left parties will have to expand popular identification with the democratic state and attain hegemony through the state's institutions before they can successfully retool multilateral institutions to reconcile labor standards across borders (Mouffe 2005a, 100-110). Much as Mouffe would have it, the 2016 Sanders campaign provided renewed

focus to the alter- globalization cause by demonstrating that once-marginal progressive critics of neoliberalism can and should attain state power (Denvir 2019). Sanders's anti-austerity messaging linked together popular sovereignty, progressive nationalism, and internationalism. As undemocratic, neocolonial austerians failed to treat Puerto Ricans as full American citizens, Sanders explained that expanding elected Puerto Rican politicians' abilities to negotiate debt restructuring with their creditors would serve as a blow to the same financiers who impoverished Greece (Sanders, interviewed by Goodman, 2015; Nichols 2016). Sanders thus implies that the way forward for alter-globalization is for activists to find concrete ways to connect their global concerns to the enhancement of democratic citizenship at home.

Race, Equivalence, and Left Populism

In addition to redrawing political fault lines by appealing to popular national issues and symbols, left populism forges new political solidarities by equating multiple social struggles. During political crises, populists can do more than form cross-class alliances. They may establish entirely new identities of people who believe their diverse struggles are inherently linked and think the progress of one group's struggle advances the struggles of several other groups at once. According to Laclau and Mouffe, under normal circumstances, systems of differences frame social identities. When social identities have differential links, people understand their identities based on who they are different from (e.g. one knows that he is a man because he is not a woman; one knows that he is a worker because he is not unemployed). However, during periods of crisis, logics of equivalence may displace logics of difference. In these instances, one issue or symbol may gain such emotional appeal that people who embrace it feel as though they all share the same identity. Even if one group is not immediately impacted by the struggles of another group, they will equate their identities in such a way as to feel an instinctual, immediate connection to distant struggles (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 126-128 and 164).

Equivalential logics only replace differential logics during political crises. Equivalential identities form in times of instability in which people realize how their social identities are areas of political conflict. Differential identities (e.g. women's traditional roles in family institutions and blue-collar workers' roles in corporate economic hierarchies) appear apolitical and neutral– they are just part of a natural order of difference. Differential identities become equivalential when social orders degenerate and the illusion of their neutrality disappears. When every social identity becomes a platform for political struggle, social movement actors are both more likely to reclaim their identities as autonomous groups with distinct political interests *and* more likely to equate themselves to other movements (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 135-136).

Consider two of Laclau and Mouffe's hypothetical examples of equivalence overtaking difference during crises. They say feminist identities based on the supposed unity of women around their shared biological sex are differential, assuming sisterhood to stem from a natural, apolitical difference. However, during crises, feminists may come to recognize the political construction of the category of women and see themselves as divided by class and race. Crisis pushes feminists to better appreciate their connections to the struggles of other social movements, such as anti-racist and union movements. Crisis sparks partisanship and division

in previously apolitical social spaces and, in so doing, inspires more and more social identities to organize autonomously. In another hypothetical example, Laclau and Mouffe say black workers are more likely to organize autonomously as blacks when they gain experience and political connections by organizing as workers in labor organizations. These workers may come to equate conflicts between workers and capitalists with conflicts between racists and people of color while recognizing such conflicts' autonomy. Crisis generates equivalence by uncovering the divisions within social groups, thereby foregrounding their connections to other social groups. Crisis encourages autonomy by pushing some social groups to organize, which in turn creates a ripple effect and causes other social groups to organize independently (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 130-134 and 140-141).

Left populist projects are uniquely capable of responding to crises by articulating equivalence between broad, diverse struggles without threatening various social movements' autonomy. Left populists use statism and partisanship to maintain very broad equivalential identities and autonomy. Left populists mark each social identity in their equivalence chains as political by relating them to citizenship and the democratic state. Left populists interpret the political conflicts shaping class, racial, and gender identities through the lens of citizenship and democracy, thereby marking these identities as spaces for the exercise of democratic participation. Populists cultivate the polarization and intense political conflict of crisis periods long after the crisis's resolution by rhetorically projecting an ongoing conflict between the people and the elite and building lasting movements of the people within representative institutions. Shared commitments to defending and expanding political and economic democracy unite various social movements through the left populist discourse, allowing groups with conflicting interests to view themselves as sharing a momentous struggle (Laclau 1990, 148- 153). Left populist discourse's emphasis on citizenship encourages people to hold split identities that are simultaneously equivalential and autonomous. A white left populist feminist, for example, may relate to union workers and racial minorities as a citizen while relating to other women as a woman (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 62-63).

Sanders is a left populist who fosters equivalencies between diverse groups of people. During his 2016 campaign, he constantly referred to economic inequality even while he was talking about racism. Sanders stressed democracy and civic engagement as unifying principles establishing an equivalential subjectivity. His language linked class and race through an active defense of democracy:

> We are facing a two-pronged attack on our democracy — unlimited money poured into the political process, paired with the systematic suppression of the vote. These are two sides of the same coin. Make no mistake: the billionaire class does not want Americans to vote…The fight for minority voting rights is a fight for justice. It is also inseparable from the struggle for democracy itself. When the votes of minorities are suppressed, it becomes easier for politicians who represent billionaires and corporations to win and hold elected office (Sanders 2015).

Sanders attempted to hold this equivalence chain together through a politically charged and divisive rhetoric of citizenship and democracy. The citizens in this chain have split identities.

They share an identity as citizens, but they maintain autonomous identities as racial subjects and workers. This autonomy does not preclude solidarity. For example, Killer Mike (2016) is a black separatist who advocates for black autonomy and self-sufficiency and his first tweet endorsing Sanders specifically appealed to the senator's support for defending and expanding the Voting Rights Act (Holpuch 2015). Recall that Angela Davis accused Sanders of ignoring the specificity of black concerns. To understand how the 2016 Sanders campaign was relevant to black issues in their specificity, it is necessary to consider how black activists are responding to a political crisis – the legitimacy crisis of mainstream black leadership – and forming new equivalential identities in the process.

Black Lives Matter (BLM) draws energy from the black community's internal divisions. BLM activists are exhausted with the black political class's hesitancy and moderation. They join with labor and left groups to work on issues long ignored and belittled by mainstream black political operatives and, in the process, establish a new political identity that is both autonomous and equivalential (Petersen-Smith 2015). Ferguson protestors developed their radicalism and militancy in part by joining the Fight for Fifteen in the months before Michael Brown's death and view their work for racial justice as intertwined with their labor activism (Smith, B. 2015). Angela Davis has explained how BLM breaks with mainstream, pro-Israel Democrats to foster sympathy for Palestine as a central element of the struggle for racial justice. Moreover, Davis has shown that this sympathy is equivalential: many black activists do not just appeal to workers and Palestinians as potential allies for specific causes, but rather emotionally and instinctually interpret their struggles as inherently linked (see Davis, interviewed by Goodman 2016b). As BLM drew closer to Palestine and labor militancy, the divisions between the black activist left and black neoliberal Democrats became more visible and bitter (see Khalek 2016).

The crisis of the black leadership class's legitimacy welds together this equivalence chain between Palestinians, low-wage workers, and black victims of police brutality. The Sanders campaign's left populism may have encouraged the long-term maintenance and expansion of this equivalence chain. Left populism is polarizing and spreads anger and political conflict throughout many layers of society. The 2016 Sanders campaign magnified divisions within the black community over the drug war, Palestine, support for centrists, and other issues. The campaign reverberated with black activists' autonomous efforts to highlight these divisions, spurn a political realignment of the black community, and affirm solidarity with other oppressed groups. Sanders's left populism gave an institutional voice to this anger with centrist liberals and sought to sustain this anger through long-term electoral politics, which might reinforce these equivalential identities over time. Cornel West's statement endorsing Sanders illustrates how the campaign's left populism enabled equivalence and autonomy through long-term, partisan organizing. West appealed to a state of crisis, anger with mainstream Democrats, solidarity with Palestine, and Sanders's focus on long-term movement building all in one short statement:

> My endorsement of Brother Bernie in the primaries is not an affirmation of the neo- liberal Democratic Party or a downplaying of the immorality of the ugly Israeli occupation of Palestinians. I do so because he is a long-distance runner

with integrity in the struggle for justice for over 50 years. Now is the time for his prophetic voice to be heard across our crisis-ridden country, even as we push him with integrity toward a more comprehensive vision of freedom for all (qtd. Tesfaye 2016)

West likewise lambasted mainstream black Democrats like John Lewis and Jim Clyburn for their opposition to Sanders and called them out for their neoliberalism (Mims 2016). Black Democrats' exasperation with Sanders and West (see Kopan and Labott 2016) suggests that Sanders's political revolution helped keep the political divisions BLM fomented on people's minds for an extended period. From this perspective, Sanders's appeals to the middle and working classes were not attempts to sidestep the issue of race, but rather statements of equivalence. Left populism's statism, appeals to citizenship, and vigorous partisanship allow crisis to continue long enough for equivalential political realignment. Fighting, politicized equivalence reconciles tensions between autonomy and solidarity.

One may argue that Sanders's 2016 campaign experimented with populist rhetoric in an attempt to create an equivalence chain linking people of color facing police brutality and voter suppression, Palestinians and others disadvantaged by U.S. foreign policy, and organized labor. Although Sanders failed to secure most black primary voters in 2016, he did win over young black voters by a respectable margin (Bacon 2016). Laclau and Mouffe's thoughts on populism lend themselves to an analysis of Sanders's populism because the theorists stress how internal divisions within identity communities facilitate solidarity among oppositional groups seeking access to power. The Sanders campaign spoke to political divisions between young black critics of American policing and a more complacent older generation, black labor activists and neoliberal Democratic Party leaders, and defenders of America's relationship with Israel and international solidarity activists.[2] Sanders and his supporters within the black community appealed to citizenship and voting rights in an attempt to subsume and synthesize many issues related to the misuse of state authority at home and abroad. The experiment did not yield a political victory, but it did expose generational, class, and ideological rifts in black politics that will be of interest to political scientists and campaigners in future elections.

Sanders on Revolution and Socialism

In the 2016 election cycle, some socialists criticized Sanders for failing to define and apply the terms revolution and socialism clearly and consistently. Laclau and Mouffe's work allows for a more generous interpretation of Sanders's appeals to socialism and revolution. Sanders is a specific type of socialist, a left populist socialist. As a socialist populist, Sanders seeks to resolve advanced capitalism's problems by extending democracy throughout many layers of society, both public and private. Sanders has called himself a "leftist populist" and sees his populism as a means to bring together broad and surprising coalitions, such as movements of "low-income people, hard-pressed working class homeowners,

---

[2] Jesse Jackson's bid for the Democratic Party nomination similarly exposed deep rifts within the black community over U.S. support for Israel (see Marable 1984).

environmentalists, renters, trade unionists, college students, and now the police" (Sanders and Gutman 2015, 40). Laclau and Mouffe write that spreading democratic control over all sectors of public life provokes the masses to establish a type of socialism appropriate for their historical and political context. Even if the people do not consciously conceive of extending democracy as socialism, democratizing social spaces eventually encourages people to fight for decision-making power over the economy. Left populists do not rely on the strictures of Marxist theory for a predetermined blueprint of what this democratic oversight of the economy will look like. Left populist approaches to revolution and socialist politics need not resemble violent socialist revolutions and actually existing socialisms of the twentieth century. Democratic agitation that leads people to seek decision-making power over the economy, even if it does not overtly call for recognizably socialist endpoints, amounts to a contextually appropriate revolutionary politics.

Socialists have long aspired to gain working class control of the means of production. Laclau and Mouffe adjust this conception of socialism for contemporary realities of advanced capitalism. Socialism is not only government or union ownership of the means of production, but also the extension of democratic input into economic decision making for many social groups, including environmentalists, local communities, workers, and consumer advocates. Under complicated, contemporary conditions, handing complete control of production to the direct producers would amount to privileging special interest groups over many other social groups whose work maintains a diversified, globalized economic system. The specific mechanisms for democratically coordinating these complex interests will vary from country to country and sector to sector; people must learn which methods of economic decision-making are appropriate for their social spaces through grassroots struggles in contact with broader political movements and parties. Nationalizing all major industries can hardly serve as a standard goal for contemporary socialism. Laclau insists that one cannot judge how left-wing a government is by how many industries it nationalizes. Instead, the task is to reformulate socialism as broad-based participation in economic production along with government support for the well-being of all kinds of people. This includes policies geared toward supporting the underemployed precariat, such as a universal basic income, a shortened workweek, and government support for workers cooperatives and workers in the informal economy (Mouffe 2000, 126; Laclau 1990, xii-xv; Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 178). Recall that Laclau says left populism, as it continually integrates more and more social groups into the democratic process, may evolve into socialism because these groups will eventually come to demand democratic influence over economic decisions.

For Laclau and Mouffe, the revolutionary process is the process by which populists catalyze mass interest in radical democracy among extremely diverse sections of the population. Revolution entails long-term social change that transforms the identity of all social groups involved in production. They define revolution as "the overdetermination of a set of struggles in a point of political rupture, from which there follow a variety of effects spread across the whole fabric of society" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 177). In other words, revolutionary actions are those that ripple across the whole of society, polarizing and politicizing more and more social identities over time. Laclau and Mouffe conceive of their revolution as a continual, ongoing strengthening and deepening of historical democratic

revolutions, such as the French and American Revolutions. Just as the initial stages of the French and American Revolutions spread democracy to one social group, white men, these revolutions continue over many years as more and more people gain access to the democratic rights associated with these revolutions. The ripple effect not only broadens, but also deepens democracy as the areas of social life in which democratic participation is possible multiply. As the democratic revolutions culminate, citizen participants will no longer merely vote for representatives, but also engage in political decision making in so-called private spheres, such as the workplace and the family (Laclau 1990, 187- 188; 227-229).

It is crucial to note that Laclau and Mouffe do not see this revolutionary process as a subordination of all social spaces and identities to formal state institutions. Rather, democracy spreads throughout all layers of the social as social movements proliferate across social life and generate democratic demands for their political representatives to fulfill. Centralized parties must not prioritize one democratic struggle over others or smother their development with preconceived conceptions of socialism (Mouffe 2013, 75-76). Populist parties should rather discursively equate variegated struggles. In short, revolution involves spreading democratic participation by more and more people into more and more spaces that society previously considered off limits for politics. Independent social movements work alongside and within representative institutions to push forward the democratic revolution that generates socialism.

Laclau and Mouffe's definition of revolution resonates with Sanders's calls for a political revolution. He sees revolution as increased democratic participation among many, regular people from very different backgrounds. Sanders does not only intend for his campaigns to win him offices. The senator says that the purpose of his electoral bids are to get various underdogs who have been discouraged from political participation (e.g. minorities, the poor) to assert themselves. He frames his campaigns as attempts to get more working people involved in government, make political participation fun and interesting, and get more people thinking about the important issues (like classism and trade) that big news networks and mainstream Democrats typically ignore (Sanders and Gutman 2015, 32, 76, and 207). Sanders intended for his 2016 presidential campaign not only to advance his career but also to galvanize many people to run for office and participate in progressive social movements throughout the country. The campaign was a "political revolution" because it recognized that fundamental change does not come from one struggle on one platform at a time; many different movements (both electoral and non- electoral) must work in tandem to further deep structural changes (Jaffe 2015, 166-167). Echoing Mouffe, the Sanders campaign recognized that extending democratic participation throughout society must not only involve popular engagement with representative government. Revolutionary change entails active social movements. In his words:

> Real change – whether it is the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the gay movement, or the environmental movement – real change never comes because some guy sitting in the Oval Office says: 'Oh gee, I think that's a good idea.' Real change only happens when millions of people stand up and demand their civil rights (qtd. Roberts 2015).

Sanders therefore understood his 2016 campaign as a way to respond to democratic social movements without coopting or controlling them. He considered running for president only after witnessing how the Occupy movement had opened Americans' minds to radical economic policy and insurgent leftist campaigns (Jaffe 2015, 162-163). Sanders's decision to allow disruptive BLM demonstrators to take his microphone (see Hains 2015) also revealed his simultaneous closeness to and independence from radical social movements. Much like Laclau and Mouffe's notion of the democratic revolution, Sanders's political revolution has aimed at drawing more social groups into the democratic process by inspiring both grassroots electoral campaigns and active participation in left social movements.

In 2016, Sanders's conception of democratic socialism, much like his depiction of revolution, appeared rather vague. However, Sanders's presentation of democratic socialism nonetheless parallels Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist understanding of contemporary socialism. Much like Laclau and Mouffe's insistence upon spreading economic decision-making power to more people with various relationships to the means of production, Sanders calls for more layers of democratic participation over economic policy-making. Sanders expresses a vision of "economic democracy" that involves the participation of the poor in setting economic policy. Under economic democracy, the poor will not only thwart right-wing attempts to block their participation, but also be considered key voices and consultants in the crafting of economic policy. Sanders believes that the U.S. can only address major economic problems, such as inadequate health services and unemployment, by involving more people in the democratic process. The poor have the solutions; politicians need to listen (Sanders and Gutman 2015, 20-26 and 272). Like Laclau and Mouffe, Sanders has responded to the decline of the classical proletariat by proposing policies aimed at assisting the precariat. Sanders is deeply concerned with overwork, contingent labor, and low-wage labor in the post-Fordist economy. While his solutions are not exactly the same as Mouffe's, he does say that the government should guarantee a job to any unemployed person who wants one, promote workers cooperatives, and advocate for policies like a fifteen dollar minimum wage to assist low-income people (Sanders and Gutman 2015, 289-291; Johnson 2015). This approach to socialism hardly fits with classical Marxism, but it does work with Laclau and Mouffe's idea of contemporary socialism as a radicalization and extension of democracy.

Thinking alongside Laclau and Mouffe, one may generously interpret the Sanders campaign's vague language about socialism and revolution as a rhetorical experiment aimed at opening Americans' minds to broader conceptions of democratic participation than mere representative democracy. Sanders sees democracy as a broader category than just competitive elections for representative office. His 2016 campaign associated democracy with a renewed labor movement and vibrant social movements setting the national agenda. His campaign was thus attempting to overcome problems that have long hindered the American left. Gar Alperovitz, a prominent defender of worker ownership, argues that the U.S. middle class is too large and complacent to respond to a left politics that appeals to violent revolution. However, Alperovitz suggests that deep reforms at the level of American political economy may well be possible if political leaders manage to funnel Americans' anger with corporate consolidation and wealth inequality into well-coordinated, practical, grassroots political initiatives and alternative workplace experiments (2011, xxv-xxvi and 226-228). Uniting the suburban middle

class with less privileged groups is an enormous difficulty facing efforts to cohere scattered, progressive, grassroots activists across the U.S. into a focused, effective political force capable of making a dent in economic inequality (Alperovitz 2011, 170-179). Building cross-class alliances for unorthodox economic proposals is tricky because the framers designed the U.S. constitution to prevent popular forces from coming together across geographic boundaries and deification of the founding documents often prevents Americans from looking beyond representative politics to embrace more participatory, expansive forms of democracy (Dahl 2003, 1-10 and 50-53).

There are some indications that the 2016 Sanders campaign achieved marginal success in reaching unlikely groups and opening their minds to the possibility of more democratic participation in economic decision-making, more active cooperation between radical social movements and major political parties, and farther-reaching state interventions to support the underclasses. Some young people testify that the Sanders phenomenon has pushed them away from despairing apathy or mainline liberalism and toward a social democratic standpoint focused squarely on increasing the social wage (see McGreal 2017). Shortly after the 2016 elections, many of Sanders's backers challenged both the far right and the center left by mobilizing around a militant resistance movement inspired in part by the senator's critiques of the Democratic Party leadership and mainstream liberal nonprofits (see Young 2018, 8-9; Knight 2016). Some expect the Sanders-influenced resistance movement to advance economic democracy:

> The work of making a pivot to a twenty-first-century Democratic Party…will fall to the generation of Sanders activists who are clearly the Democrats' future. Causes that go beyond those that Sanders have articulated—giving workers equal power on corporate boards; requiring employers to provide decent pay and benefits to all their workers, whether in traditional employer-employee relationships or not; greatly increasing the level of public provision for healthcare, child care, senior care and education; changing tax policy so that the share of income going to work increases and that going to investment decreases—these will be the kinds of issues that the young people activated by the Sanders campaign will raise, if they're to go forward in the same spirit that led them to Sanders in the first place (Meyerson 2016).

Given that Sanders's attempt to bring the Democratic party closer to militant social movements may nudge forward far-reaching progressive economic reforms, those seeking to expand democratic participation beyond traditional representative democracy would do well to study Sanders's 2016 attempt to use populist rhetoric to retool concepts of revolution and socialism for present conditions.

Conclusion

This article has responded to Sanders's socialist critics by presenting Sanders's 2016 campaign as an experiment with left populism. Viewing Sanders as a left populist suggests a more generous interpretation of certain elements of the 2016 campaign that some leftists find disquieting, such as Sanders's nationalist rhetoric, tendency to conflate race and class oppressions, and seemingly inappropriate uses of the terms revolution and socialism. I find that maintaining a focus on Sanders's 2016 efforts helps highlight the senator's populism: the

candidate's 2020 campaign presented more specific, detailed explanations of democratic socialism (see Sanders 2019) and progressive internationalism (see Sanders 2018), so his reliance on populist speech to convey his socialist politics was even more apparent in 2016. Sanders used populism in 2016 to introduce international solidarity to American audiences unprepared for a clean break with patriotic nationalism. Sanders stressed citizenship to appeal to people of color by forging equivalential associations between opposition to neoliberalism and opposition to racism. Sanders spoke of revolution and democratic socialism to inspire popular interest in economic democracy and encourage Democratic Party leaders to be more responsive to progressive social movements. For socialism to become a mainstream political force in the U.S., socialists may first have to build on Sanders's experiment by carefully constructing appeals that speak to American political and cultural divides. Doing so will require an openness to forms of socialist thought that speak to the possibilities open within the existing political system at the present moment.

This article has not tried to claim that Sanders, or any other charismatic socialist, can overcome the longstanding obstacles to left politics under advanced capitalism with populist speeches alone. European left populist parties have had enormous difficulty holding together coalitions of educated, cosmopolitan young people and older blue-collar workers (see Jäger 2019). A Sanders presidency would likely meet similar challenges maintaining unity among the democratic socialist's base. Even as president, Sanders would have a rough time implementing his most ambitious policy proposals. Given that gridlock is a feature of the U.S. constitution, Sanders's goal of amending the constitution to overturn the *Citizens United* (see Prokop 2015) decision may be unfeasible for even the most skilled of populists. Nonetheless, I find that paying attention to the Vermonter's populism helps identify the Sanders phenomenon's potentials. Observers who look beyond orthodox Marxism to appreciate Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist outlook will have an easier time grasping the purpose and possibilities of Sanders's populist rhetoric.

Bibliography

Alperovitz, Gar. 2011. *America Beyond Capitalism: Reclaiming Our Wealth, Our Liberty, & Our Democracy*, 2ⁿᵈ Ed. Boston: Dollars and Sense.

Bacon, Perry. 2016. "Huge Split Between Older and Younger Blacks in the Democratic Primary," *NBC News*, May 28, 2016. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/huge-split-between-older- younger-blacks-democratic-primary-n580996

Baldwin, James. 1955. *Notes of a Native Son*. New York: Beacon Press.

Chow, Tobita. 2018. "With Anti-China Protectionism, the Left is Aiding Trump's Xenophobic Agenda," *In These Times*, July 10, 2018. https://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/21277/anti-China-nationalism-Donald-Trump-trade-wars-left-Bernie-Sanders-unions

Dahl, Robert. 2003. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, 2ⁿᵈ Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Davis, Angela. 2016a. Interviewed by Amy Goodman, "Angela Davis on Not Endorsing Any Presidential Candidate: 'I Think We Need a New Party,'" *Democracy Now*, March 28, 2016. https://www.democracynow.org/2016/3/28/angela_davis_on_the_fascist_appeal

Davis, Angela. 2016b. Interviewed by Amy Goodman, "Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Angela Davis on Ferguson, Palestine, & the Foundations of a Movement," *Democracy Now*, March 28, 2016. https://www.democracynow.org/2016/3/28/freedom_is_a_constant_struggle_angela

Denvir, Daniel. 2019. "Today's Socialist Revival Began on the Streets of Seattle 20 Years Ago," *Jacobin*, November 30, 2019. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/11/seattle-world-trade-organization-protests-socialism

Fletcher, Bill. 2016. "Bernie and the Movement," *Jacobin*, February 20, 2016. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/02/bernie-sanders-political-revolution-jesse-jackson-democratic-president-campaign/

Foster, John Bellamy. 2016. "Is democratic socialism the American Dream?" *The Washington Post*, March 23, 2016. http://washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory

Gilbert, Geoff. 2016. "Who Plans the Economy? Imagining Free and Fair Trade," *Truthout*, July 26, 2016. https://truthout.org/articles/who-plans-the-economy-imagining-fair-and-free-trade/

Hains, Tim. 2015. "'Black Livers Matter' Protestors Disrupt Bernie Sanders Event in Seattle, Sanders Gives Up the Mic to Them," *Real Clear Politics*, August 9, 2015. https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2015/08/09/black_lives_matter_protesters_disrupt_bernie_sanders_event_in_seattle_sanders_gives_up_mic_to_them.html

Holpuch, Amanda. 2015. "Killer Mike Endorses Bernie Sanders for President," *The Guardian*, June 29, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/29/killer-mike-bernie-sanders- president-run-the-jewels

Jäger, Anton. 2019. "We Bet the House on Left Populism – and Lost," *Jacobin*, November 25, 2019. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/11/we-bet-the-house-on-left-populism-and-lost/

Jaffe, Harry. 2015. *Why Bernie Sanders Matters*. New York: Regan Arts.

Johnson, Dave. 2015. "Bernie Sanders Proposes to Boost Worker-Ownership of Companies." *Common Dreams*, April 18, 2015. https://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/08/18/bernie- sanders-proposes-boost-worker-ownership-companies

Katch, Danny. 2016. "What would a revolution look like?" *Socialist Worker*, September 7, 2016. https://socialistworker.org/2016/09/07/what-would-a-revolution-look-like

Khalek, Rania. 2016. "Atlanta mayor rejects demand to end Israel police training." *Electronic Intifada*, July 21, 2016. https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/rania-khalek/atlanta-mayor-rejects- demand-end-israel-police-training

Killer Mike. 2016. "#ABNC Killer Mike Asks Black People if they are Ready for the Revolution." *YouTube*. Video File. September 20, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM0wBiSGW-8

Knight, Nika. 2016. "'This is Not a Game': Sanders-Inspired Movement Mobilizes Against Trump." *Common Dreams*, November 16, 2016. https://www.commondreams.org/news/2016/11/16/not-game-sanders-inspired-movement-mobilizes-against-trump

Kopan, Tal and Elise Labott. 2016. "Hillary Clinton's views on Israel win out in DNC platform, for now," *CNN*, June 26, 2016. https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/24/politics/hillary-clinton-israel-dnc-platform/index.html

Laclau, Ernesto. 1979. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*. New York: Verso.

----------. 1990. *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. New York: Verso.

----------. 2005a. *On Populist Reason*. New York: Verso.

----------. 2005b. "Populism: What's in a Name?" In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza, 32-49. New York: Verso.

----------. 2014. *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*. New York: Verso.

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. New York: Verso.

Marable, Manning. 1984. "The Rainbow Coalition: Jesse Jackson and the Politics of Identity," *Crosscurrents* 34 (Spring): 21-42.

Martin, Bill. 2016. "Bring on the Crackup: Hoping for a Trump-Sanders Election," *Counterpunch*, March 28, 2016. https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/03/28/bring-on-the-crackup-hoping-for-a-trump-sanders-election/

McGreal, Chris 2017. "The S-word: how young Americans fell in love with socialism," *The Guardian*, 2 September, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/02/socialism-young- americans-bernie-sanders

McKean, Benjamin. 2016. "Is it possible to have populism without racism?" *Washington Post*, May 18, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/05/18/is-it- possible-to-have-populism-without-racism/.

Meyerson, Harold. 2016. "The Democrats After Bernie," *Dissent*, Summer 2016. https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/democrats-after-bernie-sanders-class-politics-liberalism

Mims, Sarah. 2016. "Cornel West Says Civil Rights Leaders That Support Hillary Clinton Have Lost Their Way," *Vice News*, February 28, 2016. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/j59bxg/cornel-west-says-civil-rights-leaders-that-support-hillary-clinton-have-lost-their-way

Mouffe, Chantal. 1993. *The Return of the Political*. New York: Verso.

----------. 2000. *The Democratic Paradox*. New York: Verso.

----------. 2005a. *On the Political: Thinking in Action*. New York: Routledge.

----------. 2005b. "The 'End of Politics' and the Challenge of Right-Wing Populism," in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, edited by Francisco Panizza, 50-71. New York: Verso.

----------. 2009. "The Importance of Engaging the State," *What is Radical Politics Today*, edited by Johnathan Pugh. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

----------. 2013. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. New York: Verso.

----------. 2014. Interviewed by Andreas Hackl, "'Democratize Democracy!' – Interview with Chantal Mouffe," *Transformations*, April 16, 2014. http://transformations-blog.com/we-propose- democracy-interview-with-chantal-mouffe/

----------. 2016. "In Defense of Left Wing Populism," *The Conversation*, August 29, 2016. https://theconversation.com/in-defence-of-left-wing-populism-55869

Nichols, John. 2015. Afterword to *Outsider in the White House* by Bernie Sanders and Huck Gutman, 338-346. New York: Verso.

----------. 2016. "Bernie Sanders Says the US Must End its 'Colonial-Type Relationship' with Puerto Rico," *The Nation*, May 16, 2016. https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/bernie-sanders- says-us-must-end-colonial-type-relationship-with-puerto-rico/

Pearlstein, Rick. 2015. "The Story Behind the POW/MIA Flag," *The Washington Spectator*, August 10, 2015. https://washingtonspectator.org/the-story-of-the-other-racist-flag/

Petersen-Smith, Khury. 2015. "Black Lives Matter: A New Movement Takes Shape." *International Socialist Review: A Quarterly Journal of Revolutionary Marxism* 96 (2015): https://isreview.org/issue/96/black-lives-matter.

Prokop, Andrew. 2015. "Bernie Sanders 2016: A Primer," *Vox*, October 12, 2015. https://www.vox.com/2015/7/28/18093566/bernie-sanders-issues-policies

Roberts, Dan. 2015. "Bernie Sanders finds his revolutionary rhetoric resonating in conservative Iowa." *Raw Story.* September 4, 2015. https://www.rawstory.com/2015/09/bernie-sanders-finds- his-revolutionary-rhetoric-resonating-in-conservative-iowa/

Sanders, Bernie. 2011. *The Speech.* New York: Nation Books.

----------. 2015. "The Fight for Voting Rights is Our Fight Today." *Reader Supported News*, August 15, 2015. https://readersupportednews.org/component/content/article/277/31692-the-fight- for-voting-rights-is-our-fight-today

----------. 2016."Transcript: Bernie Sanders speech in Burlington, Vermont." *Politico*, June 16, 2016.

----------. 2018. "Sanders Speech at SAIS: Building a Global Democratic Movement to Counter Authoritarianism," *Bernie Sanders Senate Office*, October 9, 2018. https://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sanders-speech-at-sais-building-a-global-democratic-movement-to-counter-authoritarianism

----------. 2019. "Bernie Sanders Explains the Importance of Democratic Socialism." *YouTube*. Video File. June 12, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9oY-GVq1TQ

Sanders, Bernie and Huck Gutman. 2015. *Outsider in the White House* New York: Verso.

Sanders, Bernie. 2015. Interviewed by Amy Goodman, "Sen. Bernie Sanders: From Greece to Puerto Rico, the Financial Rules are Rigged to Favor the 1%," *Democracy Now*, August 21, 2015. https://www.democracynow.org/2015/8/21/sen_bernie_sanders_from_greece_to

Smith, Ashley. 2015. "Should the Left Support Bernie Sanders?" *International Socialist Review* 98 (2015): p. 143.

Smith, Ben. 2015. "The fast food workers' movement and the Ferguson rebellion." *Red Atlanta*, February 15, 2015. https://redatlanta.wordpress.com/2014/10/08/the-fast-food-workers-movement-and-the-ferguson-rebellion/

Tesfaye, Sophia. 2015. "Cornel West formally endorses "brother" Bernie Sanders: "A long-distance runner with integrity in the struggle for justice," *Salon*, August 25, 2015. https://www.salon.com/2015/08/25/cornel_west_formally_endorses_brother_bernie_san d ers_a_long_distance_runner_with_integrity_in_the_struggle_for_justice/

Weigel, David. 2016. "Clinton in Nevada: 'Not everything is about an economic theory,'" *Washington Post*, February 13, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/02/13/clinton-in-nevada-not-everything-is-about-an-economic-theory/.

Yates, Michael. 2016. "Let's Get Serious About Inequality and Socialism," *Truthout*, April 30, 2016. https://truthout.org/articles/let-s-get-serious-about-inequality-and-socialism/.

Young, Ethan. 2018. "Mapping the Resistance: Insurgence and Polarization Between 2016 and 2020," *Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung*. http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files_mf/young_mappingtheresistance_eng51.pdf