

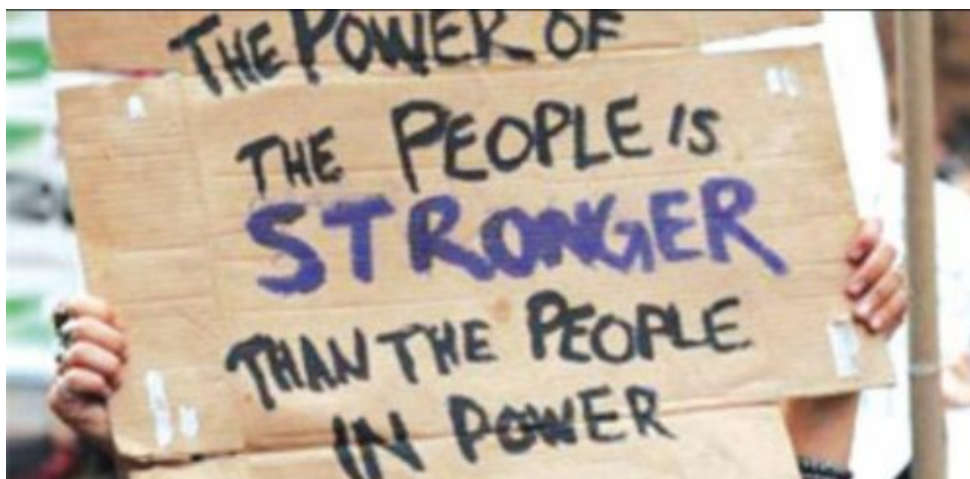


a radical newsletter in the struggle for peace and social justice

[About DV](#) [Archives](#) [Donate](#) [Contact Us](#) [Submissions](#) [Books](#) [Links](#)

2020 Election Year Is an Opportunity for Transformational Change If We Embrace Our Power

by Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers / April 22nd, 2020



Although we do not tie our organizing to the election cycle, the 2020 election is an opportunity for the people to set the agenda for the 2020s. We need to show that whether Donald Trump or Joe Biden are elected, the people will rule from below. We need to build our power to demand the transformational we need.

We are living in an opportune time, as has existed previously in the United States when many of the issues people have fought for have come to the forefront, but the two parties disregarded the people. Similar to the abolition movement in the 19th century and the progressive/socialist movement in the early 20th century, this is our moment in the 21st century for systemic changes that fundamentally alter our [healthcare system](#), [economy](#), [foreign policy](#), [environmental policy](#) and more.

As Kali Akuno of Cooperation Jackson said in our recent [Clearing the FOG interview](#) (available Monday), the right-wing is using this time to push through their agenda of corporate bailouts, deregulation, and worker exploitation. If the left doesn't organize and counter this, the country will continue on its current destructive path. The changes we want won't come from the top. Both corporate duopoly candidate's priorities are the wealthy investor class and big business. We are going to have to organize and mobilize for the necessities of the people from below.

Join our **May Day General Strike Call on Wednesday, April 29 at 7:00 pm Eastern/4:00 pm Pacific** to learn how to participate in the general strike from home. [Click here to register.](#)



Don't Fall For The Illusion Of Democracy, Create Change

The reality that democracy is an illusion in the United States has been made much clearer in the 2020 election cycle. While Democratic voters supported the Sanders reformist agenda, Democratic elites, including the DNC and the Obama and Clinton teams, and members of the Progressive Caucus organized to stop Sanders and make Biden the likely nominee despite his terrible nearly 50-year political history of corporatism and militarism and his current incompetence.

Many people still feel trapped in the endless cycle of “lesser evil” voting that has driven a race to the bottom in the United States. Voting for either of the corporate parties reinforces their corporate-militaristic agendas and takes away the people’s power to force changes. Voters are taken for granted by both major parties who know their scare tactics work.

If there was any question, the handling of the current health and economic crises clearly demonstrates the duopoly does not work for us. As trillion dollars lifelines are thrown to big business and finance, people lack health care, protection of their homes from eviction, food, worker rights, and financial support. All of these could be provided easily and are being provided to people in other countries, many of which are poorer than the US.

Taiwan, China, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, to name a few, are responding to the pandemic effectively while the US is failing. They have public health systems with health workers and doctors embedded in communities. They are able to go door-to-door to check on people and provide advice, testing, and treatment. In the US, COVID-19 has become a top killer, killing more people each week than cancer, and nearly as many as heart disease, the two highest causes of deaths. These mass deaths are occurring at a time when the economy is virtually closed. If it were open, there would be hundreds of thousands, if not more than a million deaths.

The contradiction has never been clearer. The government does not serve the people, especially the working class, it serves the wealth-class. We will not vote our way out of these crises. However, we can learn from previous movements that had significant impacts on power holders.



Huey Long threatened a third party challenge against FDR in the 1936 presidential race. This helped push the enactment of the New Deal.

Lessons From History

This is not the first time in history where the two dominant parties have been out-of-touch with the necessities of the people. In those times, political movements organized and led from below by doing two things: (1) building mass social movements, and (2) putting the movement's issues on the political agenda through third party campaigns.

Although third party campaigns cannot win in the manipulated presidential election, even without winning, third parties combined with movements have transformed the nation. Understanding how social transformation occurs is critical for those who feel trapped in the duopoly system. We discuss this in more depth in the [sixth class](#) of the [Popular Resistance School](#). In our mirage democracy, voting doesn't have much impact because the outcome of the election is predetermined in most states due to the Electoral College.

From the colonial era to the Civil War one of the most extreme forms of capitalism – owning people as property – dominated US politics. The founders of the country, slaveholders and businessmen, protected their valuable slave property by drafting a property rights constitution. This was reinforced by the two parties, the Whigs and Democrats, who prohibited discussion of the abolition of slavery in Congress. Chattel slavery was the most valuable business of the era – more than railroads, banking, and industry combined.

Throughout that time, there was a movement to end slavery. By the time the country was formed, Vermont had abolished slavery. Abolitionists kept struggling through protests, slave revolts, writing, and speeches. With Westward expansion, the contradiction of slavery escalated as the debate became whether new states would be slave states or free.

Abolitionists decided to enter electoral politics. They formed new anti-slavery parties and ran a series of candidates including former president Martin Van Buren, with the Free Soil Party in 1848, and former President Millard Fillmore, with the American Party in 1856. Like third party candidates today, abolitionists were called “spoilers,”

but they persisted. The Whigs weakened to virtually disappearing and the Democrats divided. As a result, Abraham Lincoln won a four-way race with 38 percent of the vote and ‘ended slavery’, the first third-party president elected in US history

In other cases, third parties won without winning the presidential election by putting the issues of social movements into the national debate. This is how we achieved the 8-hour work-day, ending child labor, women’s voting rights, breaking up monopolies, gaining union rights, the minimum wage, unemployment, worker’s compensation, and massive public works projects as well as retirement security and more. The entire New Deal was built on the platforms of the Progressive Party and Socialist Party in 1912 and 1928.

FDR did not come into office advocating the New Deal. It was political movements like the Bonus March of 1932 and 1936 that led to people receiving federal support. There were also protests by farmers and strikes by workers during his presidency. And, there was the threat of a third-party challenge by Huey Long on the Share Our Wealth ticket, which had thousands of chapters across the country. All of this pushed FDR away from his concern about deficits to massive spending on the New Deal before the 1936 election.

In the 1940s, as the union movement continued and the civil rights movement grew, the Progressive Party with Henry Wallace, FDR’s vice president, urged the end of Jim Crow laws and segregation in the South, the advancement of women’s rights, the continuation of many New Deal policies including national health insurance and unemployment benefits, the expansion of the welfare system, and the nationalization of the energy industry, among others.

In this century, it was Ralph Nader in 2000 who first advocated single-payer, Medicare for all. Jill Stein ran on the Green New Deal in both her Green Party campaigns, after Howie Hawkins, the current leading candidate in the Green Party in 2020, advocated for a Green New Deal in a gubernatorial run in 2010. Every Green since Nader has criticized corporatism, the wealth divide, and Wall Street corruption as well as never-ending wars and US imperialism. All of these issues are advocated for by social movements and now have majority support. They are on the national agenda.



General Strike protests in Oakland (From CNN)

Building Popular Power in 2020

The quadruple threats of the pandemic, economic collapse, climate crisis, and nuclear war have changed the national dialogue. Institutionalized racism is being acknowledged as black and brown people are

[disproportionately contracting COVID-19](#) and dying from it. Worker exploitation is starkly visible as [essential workers](#) are underpaid, lack paid sick leave and are mistreated with inadequate job safety. The fragile debt-riddled economy is evident as food lines grow with a record 22 million newly unemployed in the last month.

Many groups, including Popular Resistance, are urging a campaign of general strikes. A coalition has called for [a general strike beginning on May 1](#) and has made specific demands. People are sharing information about [how to conduct a general strike](#) so people know [what it takes](#) and [how a general strike would look](#). Even before COVID-19, in the last two years, there were record numbers of strikes and now [a wave of wildcat strikes](#) is evolving.

Organizers of the general strike campaign are using the hashtags [#GeneralStrike2020](#), [#CoronaStrike](#), [#MayDay2020](#), and [#StrikeForOurLives](#). There are many ways people can participate whether they are currently employed or not. If people refuse to pay their debts or rent, the financial system will collapse. And there are ways people can connect to the strike from home through social media.

Join our **May Day General Strike Call on Wednesday, April 29 at 7:00 pm Eastern/4:00 pm Pacific** to learn how to participate in the general strike from home. **Click here to register.**

People have power. We need to make the General Strike a campaign that continues throughout the 2020s. It needs to become the US version of the Yellow Vest movement. And, the strike can evolve with new disruptive tactics that force whoever is elected president to address the people's issues.

This election, there is only one left-progressive candidate who will be on most ballots across the country, the leading Green candidate [Howie Hawkins](#). If his campaign is heard, [the agenda of the movement](#) will be elevated. He is making progress to achieving [federal matching funds](#), which would greatly amplify him and his strategy to [unite the left](#) will strengthen the challenge against the two parties. [Gloria La Riva](#) is another left candidate running with the Party for Socialism and Liberation and [Jeff Mackler](#) is running with Socialist Action. Both will be on the ballot in some states. All three of these candidates are putting forward the agenda of the popular movement. We need to [build a left party from the grassroots up](#). The two Wall Street-funded parties need to be challenged by a party that puts the planet and people first.

The Democrats have insulted progressives for years with corporate candidates because they think progressive-left voters have nowhere else to go. They need to see that voters have an alternative and are withholding their votes. They also need to see us building an alternative that is aligned with popular movements for economic, racial and environmental justice as well as peace.

There are more thought leaders standing up to the Democrats in 2020. This includes [Krystal Ball of Hill TV's Rising](#) who has repeatedly criticized Biden and has not endorsed him, as has Sander's press secretary [Briahna Joy Gray](#), and the executive director of Justice Democrats, [Alexandra Rojas](#). Multiple new media outlets including the host of the largest podcast in the nation, [Joe Rogan](#), and podcasts with hundreds of thousands of listeners like [Chapo Trap House](#), [Kyle Kulinski](#) and [Jimmy Dore](#) have all criticized Biden and said that they are unlikely to support him. The new media reaches millions of people and is challenging the old media narrative of pushing voters to 'hold their nose' and vote for unacceptable candidates.

Saying we 'will not go along with your charade' tells the political elites that people have minds of their own and will not be manipulated into voting for candidates who they know will sell out the people on behalf of the wealthy. Combining that with an ongoing campaign of general strikes in 2020 and beyond will show the political and

economic elites that the people are taking power. The only path to victory is for people to organize and show we are not afraid to take action. It is time to embrace our power, not fear it.

Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers are co-directors of Popular Resistance. Margaret serves as co-chair of the Green Party of the United States. [Read other articles by Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers.](#)

This article was posted on Wednesday, April 22nd, 2020 at 6:04am and is filed under [Activism](#), [Bernie Sanders](#), [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\)](#), [Democrats](#), [Economy/Economics](#), [Environment](#), [Health/Medical](#), [Joe Biden](#), [Medicare for All](#), [Militarism](#), [Protests](#), [Republicans](#), [Social Movements](#), [Strikes](#), [US Green Party](#), [Vote](#), [Wall Street](#).

All content © 2007-2020 Dissident Voice and respective authors || [Top](#)