

# **Defeating Trump in 2020 & Advancing Strategy for Liberation**

*- a 'Situational Objective' for the US left -*

*"To do what we can today,  
so that tomorrow we can do what we are unable to do today." – Paulo Freire*

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## Introduction: Why did we write this?

*(from LeftRoots' National Coordinating Committee)*

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Amid the ever-increasing political turbulence in the six years since its founding, LeftRoots has remained focused on building an important but somewhat peculiar project. While we see it as an exciting experiment that could strengthen the US left and influence the future of liberation struggle in the United States, we also know it has been confusing to many. In creating and sharing this document, and in the practical work that our fall 2020 program is based upon, LeftRoots is hoping to increase clarity about and alignment with this effort among US-based social movement leftists. This reflects a recent shift in how we engage with our comrades in the broader movement ecosystem, a shift based in new developments we see in U.S. society, in our movements, and in LeftRoots itself. We hope this piece is a useful offering to the left in this extraordinary moment in history, regarding what we should do, how we should do it, and the strategic basis on which we should be making collective political decisions.

*LeftRoots has two primary purposes: 1) to develop strategy to build 21st century socialism; and 2) to develop cadres with the individual and collective skills to formulate, evaluate, and carry out such a strategy. We believe that one or more cadre organizations, or 'political instruments,' will be necessary to win liberation. LeftRoots is not such an organization. Rather, LeftRoots is trying to lay the groundwork, to help create the requisite conditions, for such a formation to emerge.*

*—LeftRoots 2017 Constitution*

The organizational purposes described in our constitution make LeftRoots unique within the United States. Are we a *political home* for socialists of color?<sup>1</sup> Yes, but that is neither our intention nor our particular purpose. Are we a national *training center* for organizers and activists who have radical ideas but who are undeveloped as leftists (e.g., who never got trained in Marxist tools of analysis and revolutionary history, theory, and praxis, as our predecessors did in the 1930s and 1970s)? Yes, and no: study is central to our collective political development, but breaking down movement fragmentation and building principled relationships across the country has been essential to our work, too. Are we a “cadre” formation united behind a single political line and program? No, though we use language similar to such historical and current formations, and we aim to help to found one or more in the coming years. Are we a disciplined organization of leftists who believe that our movements are fundamentally weakened by the lack of an effective national cadre formation, rooted in social movements, with a clear, shared strategy for winning socialist liberation? Absolutely, yes, and we hope (with many of you) to make such a

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<sup>1</sup> LeftRoots is, by design, a membership organization of social movement leftists with a super-majority of people of color and gender-oppressed people, with a strong practice of Black left leadership that includes our national coordinating committee and staff; this is rooted in an assessment of the class and social sectors that are best positioned to advance the struggle against racial capitalism and to win socialism.

formation possible, soon, for the sake of building the movements we need to win 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.

We wrote this document right now because we see, in this truly historic juncture, tendencies within the broader left of pragmatism, pessimism, and panicked reaction when our struggle is better served by sober assessment and strategic response. In our view, this moment is indeed urgent, but it calls for the kind of responsiveness best modeled by a midwife in the face of a difficult and potentially deadly childbirth, or by general Harriet Tubman in the middle of the night, hunted by dogs and yet focused on the final destination, freedom. This duality - the rawness of the danger, and the compelling power of what is possible - must both be fully faced in order to decide the best course of action. Grounded in a vision of what's possible, and in a precise and grounded assessment of the whole situation, we decide what must be done. We call this strategy.

In our work to develop strategy (and to develop ourselves as emotionally intelligent, politically sharp strategists), LeftRoots has created the 'Liberatory Strategy Framework,' which describes the necessary elements of a revolutionary strategy. This Liberatory Strategy framework and set of tools treats strategy not as a plan or a document but a dynamic, dialectical practice and process. We see an urgency in training up US social movement leftists (especially those rooted in working class Black, brown and indigenous communities) to be activists who can "formulate, evaluate, and carry out" strategy using such a strategy toolkit, and we see this as an essential part of strengthening the US left. We have a plan to begin sharing the toolkit in the movement in 2021.

### **Strategy for Our Current Situation**

Motivated by the need for strategic response to this moment, and to advance our own internal development as aspiring cadres, we are now, for the first time, actively applying the tools and methodology of the Liberatory Strategy framework to the current conjuncture, in our own organization. Because the framework is new, we are treating this very much as practice and experimentation, not as definitive prescription. We are learning how to apply parts of the framework and get practice in both developing and carrying out elements of revolutionary strategy. This is for the sake of our collective development and for the development of the stronger left that's needed to win 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.

We have written this 'situational objective' with that curious, humble, and revolutionary spirit. A "situational objective" is one of the tools described more fully in the Liberatory Strategy Toolkit,<sup>3</sup> making it possible to have *strategy for our situation* that is grounded both in a revolutionary vision of 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism and in the real limitations of the current conditions. This document argues for the following task as the central situational objective for the left, now thru

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<sup>3</sup> The full set of nine essential elements in the practice and process of liberatory strategy, as described in LeftRoots' Liberatory Strategy Toolkit, are: 1) vision, 2) structural analysis, 3) conjunctural analysis, 4) liberatory strategy, 5) situational objective, 6) scenario planning, 7) hypothesis, 8) action plan, and 9) evaluation.

January of 2021: **“defeating Donald Trump and halting the advance of the most dangerous forces of Trumpism, in 2020”.**

This objective is based on an existing socialist strategic orientation (We Believe That We Can Win) and an assessment (detailed below) that the left can contribute to defeating Trump and Trumpisms’ most dangerous forces in the ways outlined below, making possible a strategic advance to the next stage of struggle on the road to revolution. This situational objective does not see the left as strictly on either offense or defense, but rather embraces the posture that we are protagonists seeking to make and shape history on an immeasurably complex terrain.

### **A Strategy Lab not a new LeftRoots Line**

In late April, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, LeftRoots’ National Coordinating Committee revisited its assessment of the political conjuncture and concluded that current conditions created both an *even more urgent need for liberatory strategy and left cadres and new opportunities for advances toward launching one or more new national cadre organizations*. In response, we decided to ‘accelerate and intensify our collective development’, pivoting our program work in key ways. In particular, we committed to crafting a ‘situational objective’ for the moment and to practice ‘unity in action’ in carrying it out as part of a short-term strategy lab.

A true cadre organization would base a situational objective on a shared political line and general strategic orientation. LeftRoots, though, is intentionally a nonsectarian, multi-tendency project with members who hold diverse lines and strategic orientations. Given that, we have used ‘We Believe That We Can Win’—a strategy document produced by LeftRoots cadres that has been key in our internal discussions—as the basis for this situational objective, and have agreed to work together to carry it out *as if* it flowed from the political unity of a cadre organization. We will then evaluate the exercise once it wraps up in the new year.

In this document, we propose two keys to how the left should orient itself toward the next six months:

- **The left’s central objective in the next six months is to defeat Donald Trump electorally (prevent a second term) and to halt the advance of the most dangerous forces of Trumpism.**
- The left can and should carry out this objective in a manner that not only stymies the right but advances the left, putting it in better position to undermine and defeat neoliberal hegemony, carrying out the next phases of the revolutionary struggle (as outlined in ‘We Believe...’), and eventually win socialism for all our people and the planet.

Crafting this situational objective has been an exercise in grounding a left program in liberatory strategy and not simply habit. We have tried to avoid both reformism and revolutionary dogmatism, both (neo)liberal nonsense and left purity posturing. In our Liberatory Strategy Framework, a ‘situational objective’ offers a strategic guide on what’s most important right now,

given the conditions and a particular, strategic orientation to winning liberation. Not everyone in LeftRoots agrees with this objective or the underlying strategic orientation, but everyone in LeftRoots is united around the need for the left to develop strategy and strategists. And we have unity that this experiment's potential to move us along that path is more important than any disagreements we might have with the particulars of this orientation or objective.

We assembled a special team of LeftRoots cadres to develop this document. Drawing from both the NCC and the broader LeftRoots membership, this team engaged in a rigorous, expedited process that maximized use of some of the organization's more developed strategists while making space for collective development. In late July, the NCC approved this document as the basis for LeftRoots' first 'all-cadres strategy lab through 2021. That is the limit of what it contains. *It is not LeftRoots' organizational line, but rather the foundation for an important six-month experiment.* For that reason, LeftRoots cadres need not be in full alignment with its content, but all cadres must help carry this work forward, both to help us fully evaluate the experiment afterward and to give us all practice in carrying out a left program with revolutionary discipline, regardless of differences we might have with the particulars of that program. This is a key part of how we are 'accelerating and intensifying' our collective cadre formation (as called for in 'LeftRoots and the COVID-19 moment,' the NCC's updated analysis of the current conjuncture). Members across the country are working together to throw down for this strategy lab, knowing we remain a multi-tendency cadre formation (as opposed to a cadre organization), with a multi-year program designed to develop and internally debate *many more* examples of strategy between now and 2023.

### **Defeating Trump and Advancing Strategy In This Moment**

*We are living in the best of times and the worst of times, in times of dangerous reaction and unprecedented possibility, in a period characterized by overlapping and interpenetrating crises which threaten humanity's very existence. While the systemic crises of the economy, the ecology and empire are all manifestations and causes of historic levels of deprivation, strife and alienation, the ruling class seems hell-bent on doubling down on a program of ever-intensifying neoliberal austerity and militarized crackdowns.*

*In response, all around the world, people are rising up in search of genuine solutions. Though historic and inspiring, alone none of these mobilizations will be enough. What is needed is a weaving together of these struggles into a social force capable of igniting a radical transformation of the existing social, economic and political order. The nature of these times makes fundamental change possible, though not inevitable.*

*—Why LeftRoots? (2013)*

These words ring even truer in 2020 than when LeftRoots' founders wrote them seven years ago. While they pin-pointed key aspects of the conjunctural crisis unfolding around them, those founders could not have known exactly how deep and intense those crises would become, or the particular character that the 'dangerous reaction and unprecedented possibility' would take

in this truly extraordinary moment: a global pandemic, a fascistic U.S. president, a pending depression, and the widest-scale popular uprising in recent memory.

We are well aware of the pitfalls and obstacles involved in taking up the task of defeating Trump and advancing strategy for socialist liberation, and we address them below. We are calling on both the organized left, and the left wing of the U.S. social movements that are resisting the daily ravages of racial capitalism, to join us in this experiment over the next six months. Let us take bold steps together toward a deeper understanding of how we can root movement work in liberatory strategy. We want to be in deeper dialogue with you as we face this powerful moment of history, together.

- The National Coordinating Committee of LeftRoots

## Section 1: Liberatory strategy for winning 21st century socialism

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Across the United States, hard-working activists with radical politics are making great personal sacrifices to respond to the escalating crises unfolding around us. They are fighting for transformative, non-reformist reforms that address the suffering of racial capitalism in this moment, from criminalization and state violence to new fights of the COVID-19 era against austerity, mass evictions, and voter suppression. At the same time, many are frustrated by the fragmentation of our forces and are hungry for our movement work to be connected to a shared vision and national strategy. Many of us long for struggles that take us beyond short-term fight-backs and that avoid radical-seeming initiatives which have lofty rhetoric but lack an honest assessment of our forces' power. So many are struggling with a profound sense of pessimism, unsure if winning an alternative to racial capitalism is even possible.

One lesson we take from the long history of people's struggles for liberation around the world is that socialist victory requires socialist strategy. We see the lack of a shared national strategy as an invisible but fundamental weakness of the current U.S. left. The good news is that this is an internal weakness that we can overcome. Since it began back in 2014, LeftRoots has been working to develop a framework and set of tools for contemporary leftists to develop revolutionary strategy, while building the capacity of social movement leftists to become the cadres the left needs—activists who can produce, evaluate, and refine such revolutionary strategy to defeat racial capitalism and win socialism. We now call this the **Liberatory Strategy Framework and Toolkit**, and we are excited to share it with other leftists, especially our comrades rooted in U.S. social movements. We are hoping it serves as a significant advance in the effort to build a movement more grounded in strategy.<sup>4</sup>

*Strategy is particularly important when the vision is not immediately achievable. This approach rests on the premise that we—the people and our movements—will have to navigate a road with many twists and turns in order to shift the correlation of forces and reshape the terrain on which we struggle. At each phase of struggle, we must respond to Freire's pointed question, 'What can we do today, so that tomorrow we can do what we are unable to do today?'*

— *'We Believe That We Can Win' (2018)*

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<sup>4</sup> A note on language: throughout the document, you will find a range of terms that we use frequently within LeftRoots. We have tried to be consistent about defining them here, or citing another document that discusses the term further. Given the short timeline on which we produced this document, we may have overlooked some. In this case, we discuss the particular way that we use the term 'strategy' in LeftRoots.

Strategy allows us to transcend pessimism,<sup>5</sup> to take seriously the idea that, even when facing real political and practical limitations, our actions today can help us build movements capable of throwing racial capitalism into the dustbin of history. If we have a sense of the road to victory, of the set of strategic advances it will take to truly win and govern a socialist society, then in a historic moment like this one, we can focus our attention and resources on the most critical objectives.

Our actions now can advance our work to the next stage of struggle, *if we have strategic clarity* about our **vision** for the society we want, a grounded and materialist **assessment** of our conditions (instead of wishful thinking or idealism), and a core **theory of change** about what it will take to win revolutionary change in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> Without strategy, we can easily fall into the toxic tendencies of reformism, fatalism, and self-righteous dogmatism, any of which greatly weakens and disorganizes our already underdeveloped forces. A robust liberatory strategy has a strong and grounded internal logic that can orient and strengthen movement work across time. It also has within it the basis for adaptive refinement based on the real-world reassessment of conditions and on lessons from practical struggle. In short, *a strategy for our current situation must be grounded in a strategy to win liberation.*

## **'We Believe That We Can Win': A strategy for winning socialist liberation**

Concrete examples of liberatory strategy are important. For the purposes of crafting a situational objective, we are using one example, 'We Believe That We Can Win', as the liberatory strategy that grounds and guides our thinking.

In 2017, after Donald Trump was elected president and many on the left were dazed or disoriented, LeftRoots convened a group of members to develop a concrete example of liberatory strategy for our context. We needed something rooted in a rigorous method and grounded in the current time, place, and conditions of the United States. The product, 'We Believe That We Can Win,' has produced rich internal discussion and debate. As a multi-tendency, cadre-fication, not-cadre organization, LeftRoots never aimed for 'We Believe...' to function as its organizational line; in fact, we are working to produce at least two or three *more* examples of liberatory strategy over the next year, reflecting the different politics within the organization. Meanwhile, many comrades across the country have spent the last few years

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<sup>5</sup> We take this term from the important essay 'Transcending Pessimism: Rekindling Socialist Imagination' by Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch.

<sup>6</sup> Again, the full set of nine essential elements in the practice and process of liberatory strategy, as described in LeftRoots' Liberatory Strategy Toolkit, are: 1) vision, 2) structural analysis, 3) conjunctural analysis, 4) liberatory strategy, 5) situational objective, 6) scenario planning, 7) hypothesis, 8) action plan, and 9) evaluation.

running movement experiments to test some of the strategic ideas in ‘We Believe...’ We have strong enough internal clarity and alignment around many of its core assertions, as well as a willingness to experiment and learn even in the face of possible political difference, that LeftRoots is using ‘We Believe...’ as the basis for this ‘Situational Objective for the Left,’ which guides our own six-month Strategy Lab.<sup>7</sup> The full-length document, with a range of internal responses, was published in [the first issue of our strategy journal, \*Out to Win!\*](#)

Below are the key assessments and assertions in ‘We Believe...’ that have shaped this situational objective.

### ***Vision: 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism***

‘We Believe...’ grounds its strategy in a vision of **21<sup>st</sup> century socialism**, based in a new economic base called ‘the socialist triangle’, which has three interdependent pillars: social ownership of the means of production, production to meet collectively determined needs, and direct participation. This base is required to build a socialist society that can organically reproduce itself with values of human solidarity, equity, and protagonism, without extractive logic and exploitation, and without the racial and gender oppression that, though we resist, we also tend to see as inevitable. ‘Whereas the motive force of capitalism is profit, the motive force of 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism is full human development—the nurturing of truly rich and multi-faceted human beings.’

### ***Structural analysis: Racial monopoly capitalism***

The basic structural analysis in ‘We Believe...’ is that the system causing untold misery in the US and across the globe is **racial monopoly capitalism**. Racial monopoly capitalism is structured by a racialized and gendered class system in which layers of *the working class* (upper layer, middle layer, hyper-exploited layer, excluded layer) experience exploitation, oppression, and dispossession differently, but are all in contradiction with the exploiting, *capitalist class* (small-scale capitalist class, professional managerial class, monopoly and non-monopoly capitalists layers). While remarkably resilient over time, this system has been structurally vulnerable in important ways since the 1970s.

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<sup>7</sup> Our Strategy Lab is a political intervention in the current conjuncture based on a set of hypotheses about what set of actions we believe will make a particular difference in the world, to help us learn what strategic tasks will be effective (or not) in advancing the struggle for socialism. The internal details of our organizational Strategy Lab are based on the assessments and assertions in this document, but are not discussed here. For more information about that work and potentially engaging as a LeftRoots Compa, go here: <https://cadre.leftroots.net/crm/contribute-now-and-become-a-leftroots-compa/>

## **Liberatory Strategy: A six-phase 'socialist historic bloc' orientation**

Antonio Gramsci's ideas about hegemony and historic bloc<sup>8</sup> are foundational concepts for the strategic orientation of 'We Believe...':

*The concept of the historic bloc is a challenge to the misinterpretation of Marxist theory that the socialist revolution is a struggle of and for the [most oppressed segments of the] working class alone. Gramsci argues that, although one class (the working class) must be the central driving force in a revolutionary movement, a successful strategy requires the building of an alliance of multiple class [and social] forces. He describes this cross-class alliance as a 'social bloc' or a 'historic bloc.' This historic bloc is to be united by a 'national-popular' vision that represents the interests and hopes of all of its constituent class forces. The 'historic bloc' strategy is one in which - rather than 'dominating' other classes - the principal class 'leads' them by incorporating their interests and by providing a unifying vision.*

*For Gramsci, the moment when the working class develops the ability to lead other classes is the moment when it moves from marginality to impending victory.<sup>9</sup>*

Over time, revolutionary forces must 'develop the capacities that the working class will need to lead other classes and the entire nation in the fight for socialist liberation.'

**'We Believe...' puts forward a multi-phase strategy of protracted struggle during which left forces construct, and ultimately are able to lead, a 'historic bloc' for socialism.**

We call this a 'socialist historic bloc' approach, and it requires us to identify the sectors of society that we're trying to assemble together over time, to build the bloc that will be able to truly contend for power, win, and lead. Those component parts include the *driving interests/forces*, the *key forces*, and *following forces/sectors*. Depending on the conditions and correlation of forces in play at different phases of struggle, the alliances we need to make will change and grow along the revolutionary road to socialism for the 21st century.

A historic bloc approach requires a '*counter-hegemonic program*.' This is a program through which we contest for hegemony—the power necessary to govern and transform society to serve a particular class's interests—by building consent and support among broad swaths of society to see their interests as aligned with those of the leading class. 'We will need ideas that speak to the aspirations and yearnings of popular forces that can reverberate in our neighborhoods, our kitchens, our schools, and the corner store.'<sup>10</sup> This counter-hegemony requires a clear narrative/ideological program waged in tandem with robust organizing strategy, leadership

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<sup>8</sup> See the first few pages of the 'Revolutionary Road' section of 'We Believe That We Can Win.'

<sup>9</sup> See "Antonio Gramsci: A Brief Introduction to His Concepts of Hegemony, War of Position, & the Historic Bloc" by Harmony Goldberg

<sup>10</sup> *Out to Win*, p.44

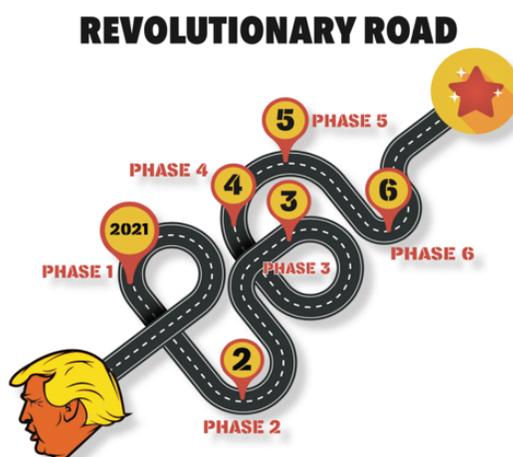
development, and political engagement, all moving the same ideological and political agenda to help everyday people make meaning out of crisis.

‘We Believe...’ lays out this counter-hegemonic bloc in some detail. ‘[T]he class and social forces that we see as the bloc’s “*driving forces*” are Blacks, Latinos, and Indigenous people—particularly women and gender-oppressed people—from the middle, hyper-exploited, and excluded layers of the working class.’ Additionally, this historic bloc will need to incorporate the interests of various ‘*key forces*’: ‘The broader multiracial working class including Muslim, Arab, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and white peoples; the multiracial lower layer of the small-scale capitalist class; Black people across most classes; women particularly in the working class; and LGBTQ peoples.’ And ‘beyond the driving and key forces, there will be other class layers and associated groups whose interests compel them to participate in the formation of the historic bloc in different periods.’

The strategic approach also involves the need to develop a liberatory movement ecosystem in which one or more ‘**revolutionary political instruments**’—and particularly a revolutionary cadre organization—play an essential role, along with a *mass* left political institution or party. LeftRoots has, organizationally, taken up the task of creating more favorable conditions on the U.S. left, and particularly the left of U.S. social movements, for the emergence of one or more 21<sup>st</sup> century revolutionary cadre organizations, formations with thousands of trained and disciplined cadres who can craft, carry out, and refine liberatory strategy across the many stages of struggle, until we win.

Finally, ‘We Believe...’ calls for six phases on the ‘revolutionary road,’ in which one phase creates the conditions for the next, and they unfold in sequence *but in dialectical relationship with one another*.

- **Phase 1:** Defeat Trump and the forces he represents in 2018 and 2020, setting the conditions for a revolutionary political instrument.
- **Phase 2:** Defeat the neoliberal bloc and animate the left.
- **Phase 3:** Constrain the monopoly capitalist bloc and expand socialist experiments.
- **Phase 4:** Build dual power and consolidate the socialist historic bloc
- **Phase 5:** Transform the State.
- **Phase 6:** Realize Socialism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century



**Phase 1** will not be complete until we have defeated ‘Trump and the forces he represents’—a key element of which will be denying Trump a second term as president. The political defeat of the Trumpist forces will in turn set the stage for the next stage of quashing the neoliberal bloc.

As we discuss in the following section, our orientation to the objective of ‘defeating Trump’ in Phase 1 requires an approach that builds the capacity of the socialist left to make an advance in Phase 2.

## **LeftRoots’ updated conjunctural analysis for 2020**

Strategy must be shaped by a grounded assessment of our situation, both what is visible in the conjuncture and what is less visible in the base of the economic structure. Here we offer a very brief update to the conjunctural analysis in ‘We Believe That We Can Win,’ integrating its assessments from 2017 with the LeftRoots’ National Coordinating Committee’s spring 2020 assessment (LeftRoots and the COVID-19 Moment) and our analysis of what has unfolded since the beginning of the May 2020 uprisings.

Leftists around the globe analyze a particular **conjuncture** to understand the dynamic set of circumstances in society. This analysis sometimes reveals a crisis or rupture in the system, providing new opportunities to contest for power. The current conjuncture in the U.S. is the product of a *structural crisis*, or a protracted period of internal contradictions within *racial monopoly capitalism*. Racial monopoly capitalism is best understood as a racialized process of capital accumulation dominated by large-scale corporations that are owned by a small circle of wealthy families and financiers. The system’s racially structured exploitation of the working class has its roots in settler colonialism, chattel slavery, and imperialism. It also relies on patriarchal property relations, the gendered exploitation of traditionally unwaged social reproductive labor, and the commodification of the non-human natural world.

This system went into crisis in the early to mid-1970s, as capital had trouble managing some of the system’s key contradictions. The steps that elites took to deal with this crisis led to the period of **neoliberal management of racial monopoly capitalism**.<sup>11</sup> But the underlying contradictions have not disappeared. In fact, many have since become antagonistic (*i.e.*, actively opposed to each other) to a degree that the system has difficulty reproducing itself. The viability of the system is in jeopardy. The resulting structural crisis has given rise to an ongoing conjunctural crisis.

This conjunctural crisis is rooted in the difficulty racial monopoly capitalism has had in reproducing itself in the wake of the 2008 financial crash. That crash reflected not only a growing stagnation in the rate of productivity and an emerging crisis of overproduction, but also the use of debt speculation to help prop up the earnings of much of the capitalist class.

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<sup>11</sup> *Also commonly understood as the period of ‘structural adjustment’ programs.*

Mortgage-backed securities, a new financial instrument, fueled real estate speculation and then touched off a housing crisis when mortgage foreclosures began to rise. The state took significant action to save the financial sector, but these underlying contradictions—principally related to declining productivity, rampant overproduction, and unrestrained financial speculation—remained unresolved. In the years since this crash, these unresolved contradictions have led to stagnant economic growth, rising inequality, and massive corporate debt. Record stock market profits and unprecedented support from the Federal Reserve, the U.S. central bank, have largely disconnected financial speculation from the productive or ‘real economy.’ Over the past decade, these dynamics have fueled an increasingly precarious situation for working people and a growing **crisis of legitimacy**, a widespread lack of confidence in the basic rightfulness and competence of ruling forces and their institutions.

***Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed these underlying contradictions and intensified this structural crisis.*** The spread of the novel coronavirus disrupted international trade, particularly between the U.S. and China, undermining an already weak economy. COVID-19 also prompted action by the Federal Reserve that once again sought to safeguard the financial system, including some of its most speculative investments. Rather than mortgage-backed securities, the riskiest investments were now in bonds, or debt, issued by various corporations. While these unprecedented interventions stabilized the financial system, they did little to protect the ‘real economy’ from the disruption unleashed by COVID-19. Federal, state, and local governments implemented public health measures that sharply limited economic activity and left millions of people out of work. Despite Wall Street’s quick recovery, the rest of the U.S. economy has suffered a worse contraction than it did in 2008, with emergency government stimulus money unable to offset massive unemployment, gnawing hunger, rising homelessness, and widespread shuttering of small businesses. Even less protected have been senior citizens and ‘essential workers’ (disproportionately Black and Latinx), who are overrepresented in the ever-rising COVID-19 death count. The virus has continued to spread across the country as the demand to ‘reopen the country’ has prioritized capital accumulation over the lives of our people.<sup>12</sup>

***Just as COVID-19 has intensified racial monopoly capitalism’s structural crisis, it has also exacerbated the ongoing crisis of legitimacy.*** Generally, a crisis of legitimacy is marked by an *absence of stable popular consensus*, the *presence of competing economic strategies*, the *realignment of social forces*, or the *decreased effectiveness of key institutions*, like the mass media.<sup>13</sup> While growing claims of ‘fake news’ might have exemplified this crisis of legitimacy (from the right) prior to the pandemic, the situation has now escalated. COVID-19’s seemingly unchecked spread across the U.S. has coincided with the proliferation of rumors, conspiracy

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<sup>12</sup> *Socialist countries have had an entirely different approach, saving thousands of lives without sacrificing everyday people’s access to food, housing and healthcare. See <https://www.thetricontinental.org/studies-3-coronashock-and-socialism/>*

<sup>13</sup> *See section on crisis in ‘LeftRoots and the Covid-19 Moment.’*

theories, and rightwing mobilizations against fact-based, scientific reasoning. This is just one example, from the right, of a deepening crisis of legitimacy; there are, of course, examples from the left, as well. They point, more broadly, to *the increasing instability of the existing hegemonic bloc* (the dominant alliance of the ruling class and its associated forces). A crisis of legitimacy need not result in a revolutionary systemic change, or even a new hegemonic bloc usurping an existing one. But an existing hegemonic bloc must act in some way to resolve a crisis of legitimacy if it hopes to survive.

Building on years of Black-led protest against state-sanctioned violence under the banner of 'Black Lives Matter,' and sparked by outrage over high-profile police and vigilante killings, the uprisings that began in late May are a powerful expression of this broader crisis of legitimacy (from the left). From the outset, they have been marked by their multiracial character, as militant challenges to white supremacy by working-class Black youth have drawn in whole sectors of society. Although each has its own point of origin and trajectory, the right's anti-lockdown protests, the George Floyd uprisings, and the expansion of organizing/protests among essential workers, have all been expressions of this crisis of legitimacy, and have in turn amplified that same crisis. As such, these developments present the left with a historic opening that we are better organized to seize than in years past. While the U.S. left is generally weak, these uprisings have given our forces greater confidence and increased momentum.

In spite of these left advances, the right remains in a relatively stronger position, and the further consolidation of reactionary authoritarian forces linked to Trumpism remains a grave threat. Operating both inside and outside of the state, we see Trumpism as a right-wing populist trend largely based on a coalition of sectors of corporate elites, evangelical Christians, and white nationalists.

**This combination of serious opportunity for the left and grave danger from the right, amidst a series of escalating economic, political, ideological, and public health crises, shapes the primary contradiction of the current conjuncture.**

## Section 2: Situational objective during a historic moment for the left (August 2020 thru January 2021)

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### A. WHAT: The objective

The primary contradiction of this moment is between the interests of Trumpism's reactionary authoritarian bloc, anchored in white supremacy, and a multi-class pro-democracy bloc, spurred by initiative from the driving and key forces.

*Given this, we propose that the central objective of this moment is to defeat Trump electorally, and to halt the advance of the most dangerous forces of Trumpism, in 2020.*<sup>14</sup>

### B. WHY: The reasoning

As noted above in the previous section, we are in the midst of a historic conjunctural crisis that has emerged out of a decades-long structural crisis within racial monopoly capitalism—a crisis the ruling class has failed to resolve. We are now in a period in which a global pandemic, a looming depression, unprecedented uprising against white supremacy, armed rightwing mobilizations, and a heightened crisis of legitimacy are taking the United States into uncharted, highly contested political territory. This combination of conjunctural factors has led to a rare opening for the left. Public opinion among key sectors of the population has dramatically shifted on questions of white supremacy, street protests, and the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, splits among some sections of the hegemonic bloc seem to be opening or widening.

All of this is occurring just months away from a pivotal presidential election. Like all presidential elections, it will not change the basic social or economic arrangements of exploitation under racial monopoly capitalism. But it does have the potential to unleash a new era of openly reactionary, authoritarian rule by the Trumpist bloc. This would in many ways continue this country's long tradition of violent white supremacist reaction to periods of *economic turmoil*, *social upheaval*, and *political instability*. In the fall of 2020, all three factors will be in play. Consequently, at the very moment that we face exciting openings for the left, we also face another grim reality: oppressed and exploited people in the U.S. face levels of material suffering, racial terror, state violence and repression not seen here since the heyday of the Jim Crow South. It is our sober assessment that we cannot make any real advance down the revolutionary

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<sup>14</sup> The logic of this objective, and this section, flows from the assertions and assessments Section 1, so please review if needed.

road without first defeating Trumpism politically, and this requires a decisive electoral defeat for Trump in November and his departure from the White House in January.

### ***What is possible if we achieve this objective***

The marked turn in public opinion around racist policing and white supremacy, and the participation of historic numbers of people in this summer's uprisings have created important new opportunities for the social movement left to play an important role in helping to win a people's defeat of Trump in November. This electoral victory has the potential to qualitatively change the balance of forces, to allow us to shift our focus from Trump to the forces of Trumpism, and then to neoliberal management of racial monopoly capitalism itself.

- ***Delegitimizing Trump.*** A decisive electoral defeat politically delegitimizes Trump, demonstrating that his approach to governance does not have broad, popular support. In addition to denying Trump access to the levers of state power, it would also throw into question the viability of his brand of politics, serving as a warning for those who might come after him.
- ***Weakening Trumpism.*** Three of the most dangerous forces Trumpism represents are right-wing mobs and paramilitaries (such as the armed militias that he is mobilizing into the streets), right-wing evangelicals, and the most anti-democratic sections of capital (such as the Koch brothers). These forces pose a range of physical, political, and ideological dangers in the immediate moment. (The ideological threats can be more subtle or better disguised, but think, for example, of how evangelical anti-science gives cover to anti-science COVID-19 conspiracies.) These forces also represent an emerging backbone of potential long-term authoritarian rule.

Keeping Trump from a second term will make it far more difficult for those forces to consolidate an authoritarian political project with sectors of capital and the government (including the military) that are *not* openly opposed to bourgeois democracy.<sup>15</sup> That would not, however, fully eliminate the Trumpist forces as a future threat. Indeed, a resounding defeat might even lead to a more dangerous moment in the short term as Trumpist forces lash out at those they blame for their loss. But our assessment is that even such a backlash would come from a decidedly weaker position.

- ***Building a popular majority opposed to authoritarian rule.*** Defeating Trump makes space for social movements to build on this historic opening. It will stop many of the most brutal forms of state repression and austerity, creating space for social movements and the left to build power by fighting for and winning an escalating set of non-reformist, structural reforms. It will create space for the left to develop the strength, relationships, and

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<sup>15</sup> By 'bourgeois democracy,' we mean the limited political rights that exist under racial monopoly capitalism.

strategic orientation required to win. Most obviously, this moment—rich in Black-led and pro-Black anti-racist uprisings that continue to reshape the political discourse—presents new opportunities to build a broad front that can strike significant blows against the white supremacist project.

The fight to defeat trump will give the ever growing number of open leftists and socialists across the country practice working together. If we do so well and learn as we go, we will be in a better position to assert left leadership in the next period. Stepping into the crisis of legitimacy (which would not end even with a Trump defeat), the left can get invaluable experience in what it takes to lead and govern for the sake of all of society. This fight, then, would be an important step toward a more coherent and powerful left in the U.S.

- ***Pivoting to fight Biden.*** The immediate task upon defeating Trump would be to organize *against Biden and the rest of the neoliberals*. Defeating Trump will allow us to do this with basic bourgeois democratic rights in place.

Rather than waiting until after Trump's defeat, the left needs to be preparing for this pivot as it works to stop him at the ballot box. This election presents an opportunity to build and strengthen the sort of independent political organizations and counter-hegemonic narrative programs that can sustain beyond this particular electoral fight and be nimble enough to take on either of the major bourgeois political parties. This will be key in the next stage of building a historic bloc for socialism.

### ***What could happen if we don't do this***

Trump staying in power would be an unmitigated disaster for our people and our forces, here in the U.S., in the global south, and around the planet. His bloc has been struggling to cohere since 2016, and his re-election would give them a huge leg up in consolidating their reactionary, white supremacist, authoritarian governing power at all levels of the state. As the chief executive, Trump and his appointees directly control key branches of the federal government, including the armed forces, the intelligence services, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Homeland Security.

#### » *IF TRUMP WINS THE ELECTION*

If Trump stays in office by winning the election, the Trumpist bloc becomes more powerful. Not only would re-election confer greater legitimacy on Trumpism, but also increase opportunities for it to operate more violently, posing a greater danger to the working class and the planet. Winning a second presidential term at the ballot box will embolden the reactionary tendencies in that bloc, already agitated by the erosion of the United States' standing as the sole global hegemon and the inexorable march toward the day white people become a mere plurality in this country instead of a majority. Rather than a robust, issue-based agenda for his second term,

Trump is building his campaign around a promise to restore and maintain ‘order’—either by spouting racist anti-Asian rhetoric, castigating ‘looting,’ criminalizing street demonstrations, or undermining the demands of frontline workers. In place of policy proposals, he primarily offers a populist strongman posture, one that he is only likely to double-down on should he win re-election. We will certainly see increased, unchecked state violence and police killings, particularly of Black people. And with Trump’s ‘order’ now also meaning the ‘normal’ functioning of the economy despite the ravages of the pandemic, we can also expect tens of thousands more needless deaths from COVID-19.

» *IF TRUMP LOSES THE ELECTION*

Losing the election is not a guarantee that Trump will not serve a second term. His early-and-often attempts to discredit the entire electoral process—especially any measures taken to account for the real public health concerns of holding a traditional election during a deadly pandemic—raise real concerns that Trump could lose at the ballot box but refuse to leave office, trying stay in power by force or by fomenting a crisis. If he does, the militance of the left will be crucial in denying him a stolen second term.

If the left has not been active in the electoral anti-Trump struggle, it will be less prepared to respond to this scenario. In this sense, our best approach to the current moment is one of **protagonism**. This is the individual and the collective practice of everyday people acting as the subjects, not objects, of their own individual (private) and collective (historical) stories.<sup>16</sup> Protagonism can build the active engagement of oppressed and exploited people, putting our forces in far better position to fight back against any post-election power grab from a defeated Trump.

Put another way, if we stand on the sidelines, abstaining from the effort to defeat Trump at the ballot box, we leave ourselves less prepared to respond to the subsequent developments in this unfolding conjunctural crisis, whatever they might be. This is particularly important for safeguarding what little political space we can currently claim for organizing and mobilizing our people. The left’s active involvement in this space will put us in the best position to defend it, particularly if Trump’s bloc moves to shut it down by force. If we fail this year to defend this political space for our movements and our communities, we will more than likely lack the capacity we need to build power and advance our forces, in the years to come.

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<sup>16</sup> For more on what we mean by ‘protagonism,’ see [‘Developing Mass Protagonism’](#) in *Out to Win!*, Issue 2 (March 2020).

### C. FINER POINTS: What the objective means and what it does not

'Defeating Trump electorally and halting the advance of the most dangerous forces of Trumpism' could encompass a wide range of activities and outcomes. Not all of them are included in this situational objective.

#### *What this objective means*

- Leftists must be clear: In order for Trump to lose, Joe Biden—as politically reprehensible a figure as he might be—must be elected in November and take office in January. We simply cannot shy away from the reality that *dumping Trump requires voting for Biden*. With the danger of another Trump term looming, abstentionism or voting for third-party candidates is simply too dangerous.
- During campaign season, leftists will have to work with a variety of forces—even some class enemies—to clear space for us to make a left advance. This 'anti-Trump, pro-democracy bloc' will be a multi-class alliance. It will likely include suburban progressives, newly activated Black Lives Matter activists, radicalized millennials, downwardly mobile white workers—but also tactical alliances with the neoliberal, ruling-class Democrats (and some Republicans). Defeating these ruling-class forces will become an immediate priority after suppressing the Trumpist threat. Working with them won't feel good. It may be nauseous, painful, and downright depressing at times, and it will call us on us to exert clear political leadership in new and uncomfortable ways. It will also be important practice for our forces as we develop greater clarity about the roles all of these various sectors might play in a future historic bloc for socialism—some might be driving forces, some might be key forces, some might be following forces, and some might be future opponents. This impacts how we engage with and organize different sectors in this period.
- Rather than simply mobilizing voters to go to the polls, we must organize with an **independent line and narrative program** that distinguish us from the neoliberals; that help future driving and key forces see and understand the root causes of our conditions in ways that the neoliberals simply cannot; and that are more likely to win over key voters that Biden will need to actually win. Central to this will be projecting an independent set of demands and a program for how they should be achieved. This alternative program can be a core part of winning over voters, particularly in the working class, while also pointing toward the sort of struggle we must wage once Trump leaves office. To do this, we must build and strengthen **independent political organizations** that fight to defeat Trump in the general election and then continue to fight the forces of Trumpism as well as the neoliberal bloc led by Biden. If carried out effectively, this approach to the election will help us to lay the groundwork for the sort of revolutionary political organization that

draws together diverse popular sectors and social actors behind a common revolutionary vision—the kind of organization without which we cannot win 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.

- To achieve this situational objective, we need both *millions of voters* and *militant people power*. Trump needs to lose on election day by a decisive margin, to minimize his ability to steal the election (claiming fake votes, etc.). And no matter the margin, we must be prepared to defend the election results with militant street action until the inauguration and transfer of power is complete.
- This objective clearly sees the defeat of Trump not as an ending, but as the launching point for new struggle. As we've described, 'We Believe...' posits a six-phase strategic orientation that begins with Phase 1, 'Defeating Trump and laying the groundwork for a revolutionary political instrument.' This situational objective for Aug 2020-Jan 2021 seeks to advance Phase 1, providing us with the capacity to complete the rest of that phase. To do so requires politically defeating Trumpism (which encompasses more than just denying Trump a second term as president), laying the groundwork for the revolutionary instrument, and building the power of our forces to defeat the neoliberal bloc (Phase 2).

### ***What this objective does not mean***

- This objective does not mean that left forces should simply fold into Democratic party campaigns with neoliberal messaging and plans.
- This objective does not mean that left forces should hide our politics. In fact, whenever possible we should be open socialists against Trump, voting for Biden, defending democracy.

## **D. ASSESSMENT POINT: Can this objective be achieved? Might it happen even without left forces?**

While mainstream polling suggests that Biden will win the election, that outcome is not a given, and it is certainly not clear that the neoliberals have what it takes to defeat him *decisively*. Even if the polling were more lopsided, we all recall how unreliable predictions based on such public opinion polls turned out to be in 2016. We have more to learn, but the assessment of leftists who are knowledgeable about Democratic party operations is that the broad pro-democracy bloc against Trump will marshal more resources and capacity than neoliberal Democrats did in 2016, and that the neoliberals will avoid the worst of their mistakes from that election cycle. Anti-trump forces will spend billions of dollars to defeat him. But Joe Biden is an extraordinarily weak candidate, the neoliberal program is incoherent and falling apart, and the Democrat establishment historically runs operations that fail to effectively speak to and turn out the voters

who have most at stake to defeat Trump. This means that we cannot rely on the Biden campaign's ability to defeat Trump without the left. We have to help Biden if he is going to win.

We must also account for the reality that Trump, the Republican party, and broader right-wing forces are investing more into voter disenfranchisement and into formal and informal voter suppression than we have seen in half a century—and the ongoing pandemic is likely to suppress voter turnout even further.

As we write this, more social movement leftists are already engaged in local, state, and national 'united front'-type electoral initiatives than at any time we can remember. We hope this document encourages leftists across the country to strengthen the work that has already begun.

## **E. HOW: A left approach to achieving this objective**

### ***How our work can set the stage for struggles beyond this situational objective***

Given our commitment to strategy-development, and our grounding in a particular, multi-phase strategy for winning socialist liberation described in the previous section, our *approach* to achieving this immediate situational objective needs to advance broader strategy, requiring us to:

- ***Fight for more than what is in front of us.*** Leftists must not act like political pragmatists or short-term thinkers who simply react to immediate threats. We are materialists with sober assessments, rooted in a revolutionary strategy to win socialism. We are socialists committed to the hard work of organizing unorganized sectors of the working class, of winning over sectors of society beyond 'the most marginalized' *so that we can build a multi-racial, cross-class historic bloc for socialist liberation.*
- ***Emphasize the need for strategy.*** This situational objective is not a tactical plan for LeftRoots, for the left, or for our movements. Tactical plans can and should vary according to the particular aims of those making them and the conditions they face.<sup>17</sup> But this situational objective *does* demand that we make those tactical plans with strategy in mind—namely, to politically defeat Trumpism (ending 'Phase 1' in 'We Believe...') in a manner that *helps make more possible the next stage of struggle* (building the revolutionary political instrument and defeating the neoliberal bloc once and for all). The

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<sup>17</sup> LeftRoots' tactical plan for its 2020 Strategy Lab, not discussed here, tests a series of hypotheses based on the approach in this document; it involves mobilizing voters to defeat Trump through key IPOs organizing key constituencies, developing independent line & narrative program, and preparing our forces for the scenario in which Trump loses the popular vote & refuses to leave office.

complexity that leftists must hold is doing all of this without sacrificing the central objective of getting Trump out of the White House.

- ***Turn Biden's weakness to our advantage.*** To defeat Trump, we will have to take advantage of the opening discussed above by marshaling the broadest forces possible. The fact that Biden is such a weak candidate means that we cannot rely on the Democrats' ability to defeat Trump without the left. This is undeniably a burden, but we also have an opportunity to turn Biden and the Democrats' weakness to our advantage. With fewer people likely to feel a strong connection with Biden's platform or with him personally, we can make the left's independent line—not the neoliberal Democrats' message—the set of ideas with which voters associate their vote. And after the election, rather than feeling restrained out of a sense of loyalty to 'their candidate,' social movements and popular forces can more readily oppose a Biden administration when it (no doubt frequently) acts against the left ideas voters were voting for.
- ***Build a multi-class front to defend democracy.*** Various political tendencies on both the left and the right want to 'dump Trump' and halt his attacks on bourgeois democracy (voting rights, forms of racism, etc.). The broad, multi-class anti-Trump front would include the driving forces in the working class (Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples, per 'We Believe...') along with other key forces (the multi-racial, multi-national working class), intermediate forces (professionals, some small business, etc.), and ruling-class forces that have split with Trump (either because he is a threat to democracy or, as they see it, to the neoliberal management of racial monopoly capitalism). Left forces are not now positioned to lead this bloc, but can play some role, particularly in trying to avoid negative concessions. To be clear, this front is not the historic bloc we will need to win 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism, but how we engage in this front can set us up to build that historic bloc down the road.
- ***Lay the foundation for struggle ahead.*** In this period, we will need to navigate the tension between organizing the communities most needed to build a socialist historic bloc (a central feature of the 'We Believe...' liberatory strategy), and the need to turn out voters required to defeat Trump in November. Wherever possible, social movement leftists must exercise leadership within broad alliances and fronts to push against tactical concessions that compromise the left's capacity to organize those 'historic bloc' communities in 2021 and beyond—without sacrificing the centrality of our situational objective right now.

### ***Ideas about method***

1. Leftists should participate in—and, where possible, lead—the broad pro-democracy bloc against Trump and Trumpism described above.

**2. Leftists should organize in the electoral arena against Trump/for Biden with an independent left line, and through independent political organizations whenever possible.**

- An *independent line* highlights reasons to ‘dump Trump’ that distinguish us from the neoliberal Democrats, build on the current opening, and advance our strategic orientation. How this looks will vary depending on geography, local race and class factors, and other political conditions of each place.
- Our work should strengthen *independent political organizations* through the elections (and support a networked set of pro-socialist leaders that can build/advance a shared agenda through a future political instrument). Independent political organizations are key because they allow us to organize our core forces to build left political power at a scale beyond most of our grassroots organizations, and with an independent line not controlled by neoliberal Democrats. Many leftists have been building IPOs for some time in several key states, anchored in driving and key forces, and are in a solid position this electoral cycle.

**3. In this next six months, with this independent left line, the left should organize class layers and social sectors that:**

- will make a difference in the actual voter math toward defeating Trump—battleground states and counties, voters we are able to turn out, etc., *that are likely to swing the outcome of the national election.*
- are not already covered by corporate Dems/neoliberals’ electoral work.
- are in locations/constituencies where organized social movement forces exist and are active, where social movement leftists are committed to more than just defeating Trump.
- will vote for Biden AND can be organized to demand more than what Biden will do (working-class people of color over Panera voters as an example).

**4. This organizing should be anchored in key issue fights that have become more popular in this period.**

Being grounded in such struggles will prepare us to win fights in 2021 against austerity and against Biden neoliberals, especially given the depression-era conditions that are emerging.

- The demand to ‘Defund the Police’ and the recently proposed Breathe Act are examples of issue campaigns with increasingly broad support. There are many more in municipalities where social movement forces with left politics are concentrated.
- Healthcare remains a high priority in the face of the ongoing pandemic and, at this point, most of the country supports some form of Medicare for All.

- Strengthening public sector unions (e.g., teachers) and the power of the communities they serve.
- The BLM uprisings, alongside and intersecting with renewed labor struggles in some key sectors of essential workers (nurses, teachers, warehouse workers, dock workers, taxi workers, laundry workers, food processing, domestic workers and service workers, etc.), which are anchored by the Black, Latino/a, and Indigenous 'driving forces' of the potential historic bloc.
- Note: a promising way to think about such fights is that the left can highlight the contradiction between *the repressive apparatus of the state* (police, prisons, the military) and the *reproductive apparatus of the state* (schools, healthcare, childcare), advancing a pro-socialist agenda oriented around diverting resources from the former to the latter.

### 3. Defend and expand democratic rights in the electoral arena.

The white supremacists can advance their agenda only by disenfranchising the millions of people that oppose it. Voter suppression /disenfranchisement is a key part of the Trump camp's electoral strategy. Defending voting rights is key for the left; expanding the electorate (e.g., registering and mobilizing unlikely or infrequent voters, re-enfranchising those who have lost their voting rights, etc.) is also a counter to voter suppression.

### 4. Scale matters; nobody should sit on the sidelines on this one.

A very strong margin of victory provides the best chance to get Trump to step down peacefully (and even then, there are no guarantees). Trump's defeat may require the largest-ever turnout of people of color, youth, and the multiracial working class, before and on election day. The engagement of millions is also required to win a socialist future, or even just to push back against authoritarian rule, so organizing these communities at a mass scale is key not just for this fight but beyond. Independent left forces cannot (yet) turn out tens of millions of voters on our own; reaching for a new level of scale will help accomplish our objective.

## Building the Revolutionary Political Instrument

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Defeating Trumpism is only one part of the left's task in Phase 1 of the strategy in 'We Believe That We Can Win':

**Phase 1:** Defeat Trump and the forces he represents in 2018 and 2020, setting the conditions for a revolutionary political instrument.

'We Believe That We Can Win' strategically, and LeftRoots organizationally, share the view that the left urgently needs one or more new, national revolutionary cadre organizations rooted in U.S. social movements, and that such "a cadre organization must have a coherent, articulated strategy for achieving liberation."

A second Trump term will make it more difficult to work openly to build a revolutionary cadre organization in the coming period. Trump himself has made this clear in his escalating rhetorical attacks on 'anarchists' and 'Marxists' in the campaign-heavy months since the uprisings against police violence began. The heightened repression and surveillance that would come with a Trump victory would constrain and undermine efforts to build the strategic and operational unity within the left required to launch such an organization. .

*We believe that winning socialist liberation will require mass social movements of exploited and oppressed people. Building these movements is the work that LeftRoots members are individually rooted in and committed to. However, LeftRoots exists because we also believe that winning socialist liberation will also require that we build a robust, liberatory movement ecosystem in which **revolutionary cadre organizations** play essential roles. We see the challenges, weaknesses and gaps on the 'revolutionary left' and in U.S. social movements, and we are collectively committed to changing those conditions in order to make what now seems impossible, more possible -- winning 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.*

*Launching a new cadre organization is not just adding a new formation to the movement ecosystem. Building on revolutionary history and theory, [we have a] central hypothesis that the formation of the **new cadre organization/s will make possible a qualitative leap in the development of a liberatory movement ecosystem in the U.S. needed to win 21<sup>st</sup> century socialist liberation.***

*- LeftRoots internal document, summer 2020*

If the US left currently had a disciplined, trained cadre formation (a 'revolutionary political instrument, as articulated by Chilean leftist Marta Harnecker), rooted in social movements of oppressed and exploited people and **united in action by shared vision and strategy**, thousands of once-isolated radical activists and activities could add up to a cohered political force, capable of contending for power and building the kind of liberation movement we need to win. We have many important formations but filling this need is urgent; we are fundamentally weakened without it. We are strategically, politically and emotionally "overwhelmed". And while we don't

think movement conditions are quite “ripe enough” for such cadre organization to launch right now, it is our assessment that movement conditions are more ripe than they’ve been in decades.

LeftRoots has articulated what particular shifts in movement conditions we believe could make a big difference in just the next few years, including: the development of liberatory strategies for winning socialist liberation that many leftists participated in developing and debating; the training of many more social movement leftists in ideological, political, organizational, and social-emotional cadre-level capacities; the strengthening of principled relationships amongst and between ‘party’ leftists and those from social movements; and the development of a layer of movement organizations and leaders who have both more strategic clarity and more emotionally intelligent practices.

**Our hope is that the work of defeating Trump this fall, with the approach outlined above, will engage social movement leftists in such a way that we develop new capacities and relationships that move us closer to launching the revolutionary cadre formation that we so urgently need.** In LeftRoots, our Strategy Lab is organized to deepen internal development and cohesion, no matter the outcome of the election. And our hope in sharing this situational objective beyond our ranks is to **generate principled discussion and debate** about this situational objective amongst social movement leftists in particular. We hope that such discussion, in aligning with the objective as well as *disagreeing with it on strategic grounds* - will deepen our commitment to ground our political decisions in strategy and grow our capacities as socialist strategists.

Leftists engaging in an anti-Trump bloc on the basis of revolutionary strategy, not moral imperative or short-term pragmatism, would be an advance over the kind of purity politics that unnecessarily divide the left and weaken our forces. If a set of leftists engage in anti-Trump work and can clearly articulate both the immediate ‘situational objective’ and the broader liberatory strategy it helps to advance, we can leverage our work this fall far beyond one presidential election.

We hope, and anticipate, that a wide range of social movement and left forces will be working to defeat Trump this year. Building relationships among and between open socialists in the course of anti-Trump political work will help to decrease fragmentation, particularly among US social movement leftists, required to launch a new national political instrument. We can use this election season to make real advances to help build the kind of revolutionary ‘we’ that we need.