

# **Smash the Duopoly and Build Dual Power**

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In the wake of the 2024 US presidential election, there has been much weeping and gnashing of teeth, but the angst has been largely misdirected. During these challenging times, correct political analysis is critical to orientation, clarity and even sanity. Whatever one's feelings about the election, thing much is clear: the threat posed by the U.S. against the oppressed and working classes of the world continues unabated. Not starts, but continues.

While the election of Donald Trump comes with dire consequences, domestically and globally, it must be clear that he is not the central problem or primary contradiction confronting the Black working class, including women, queer folx or immigrants. The primary contradictions that we must confront are rooted in imperialism, capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy, of which Trumpism, like the isms of Biden, Harris and Obama, is merely a particular expression.

Exceptionalizing Trump dangerously clouds our perspective by warping our analysis towards an individual and his personality while diverting our gaze away from root causes, systems and historical lessons. Whatever the flaws and evils of Trump- and there are many- make no mistake that the fundamental task of the Democratic party is identical to that of the Republicans- to protect and advance the imperial objectives of the US empire- even if they differ modestly in the deployment of strategies used towards that advancement.

As such, the answer to Trump is not Biden or Harris or whoever the Dems trot out before us in 2028 and beyond, it is independent organizing building Dual Power structures towards our own liberation.

## **Economic Duopoly**

The term duopoly was coined by economists describing markets dominated by two entities or companies. A duopoly is a type of oligopoly- a market dominated by multiple entities- and similar to a monopoly, or market dominated by a single entity or company.

In capitalism, duopolies persist and thrive by crushing competitors through unfair trade practices. Even though they are ostensibly arch enemy competitors, members of the duopoly are actually partners who conspire with each other in at least two ways. The first and most obvious area of conspiracy is to prevent other brands from gaining market share and threatening the duopoly itself.

But the second and more interesting conspiracy is the way in which members of duopolies support and prop each other up in order to avoid the social and regulatory consequences associated with monopolies. Because monopolies are despised by the public and can be broken up by regulators, the duopoly both competes with each other for profit and simultaneously conspires with each other in order to keep those same profits.

Duopolies are inherently paradoxical, where the players are engaged in direct competition for profit while also having a vested interest in the success of the other. If one of them 'wins' the other is a monopoly who will eventually lose as well. In this respect, duopolies are more successful economic models than monopolies.

Examples of duopolies include the soda market, dominated by Coca-Cola and Pepsi, and the computer software market, dominated by Windows and Apple OS. Some of the ways those duopolies maintain their dominance is by conspiring to conceal other options, absorb options that grow in popularity into to duopoly, and by making options outside the duopoly impractical to use.

Even though other options often exist, the duopoly deploys unfair practices to make those options difficult or impractical to choose. For example, in the soda market brands not owned by Coca-Cola or Pepsi are often denied shelf space in stores at the aggressive urging of the big two. The duopoly conspires to both keep other options from you and make creates the illusion of option between the two of them.

If another brand does somehow breakthrough, as occasionally occurs with unique flavors coming from the Caribbean or regions of Africa, they still must contend with the duopoly and, therefore, are frequently acquired- through an exchange of money- and absorbed into the duopoly.

In the computer market, the duopoly often denies big box stores access to their products if the store tries to sell a different operating system. Even worse, the duopoly pressures software companies to only make versions of their products compatible with the duopoly. In the end, it is not only more difficult to find a computer with the Linux operating system, but many popular software titles are simply not made to run on that platform. This is the work of the duopoly.

In both of these duopolies, the two entities sell the exact same thing, differing slightly only in product configuration and how they market and package themselves.

Coke is often described as having a sweeter syrupy taste, contrasting with Pepsi's sharper more citrusy flavor and extra carbonation. Coke markets itself in tradition, nostalgia and a sense of Americana, contrasting with Pepsi's marketing emphasis on youth and popular culture. But they are both brown carbonated soft drinks that the average person could not distinguish in a blind taste test.

The Windows operating system allows for more customization and a desktop that is easy to visually navigate, contrasted by the Mac OS modern and hip interface. Windows markets itself to businesses and professionals, while Mac targets younger users and creatives interested in the aesthetics of their equipment. But both are ways of accessing digitized information and making that information easy to formate and manipulate with the key differences being matters of personal choice, not of unique functions.

## **Political Duopolies**

In addition to the economic definition, duopoly is a term also used to describe a political landscape dominated by two entities or parties, who compete for votes, as well as dollars, but also share a deep interest in maintaining their co-powers. Political duopolies are also similar to one party political systems in the concentration of power.

Political duopolies persist and thrive by crushing growing third parties through the unfair erection of hurdles to political participation. Even though each is ostensibly the loyal opposition dedicated to protecting the public from the other, both parts of the duopoly are actually partners who conspire with each other in at least two ways. The first and more obvious area of conspiracy is to prevent other parties from gaining popularity and threaten the duopoly itself.

But the second and more interesting conspiracy is the way in which members of duopolies support and prop each other up in order to avoid the public outrage that comes with Western powers being labeled one-party political systems. The political duopoly simultaneously competes against each other for votes and conspires with each other to create the illusion of options, thereby maintaining a stronghold on political power.

Like economic ones, political duopolies are also inherently paradoxical, badmouthing each other in public while making mutually beneficial backroom deals. If one of the parties were to 'win,' it faces two insurmountable hurdles: first, the state is now one-party which, ironically as a result of the propaganda used to legitimize duopolies, is considered a dictatorship. And second, the absence of a loyal opposition leaves them with no viable excuse for failing to execute the populist rhetoric they spouted on the campaign trail, with full passion but no intention of fulfilling.

This is not to suggest that these political parties do not want to win elections over each other, but their relationship is deeply symbiotic with each needing the other as a partner and a convenient foil. Without each other, they would have no one to blame for their failures except those with no power at all.

The loss of one part of the duopoly kills the con. The good cop – bad cop setup is a remarkably successful ploy, but one that only works when both cops exist and play their role faithfully. A single cop cannot run the same game.

## **The US is a Duopoly**

With the dominance of the Republican and Democratic parties, the US is a full political duopoly. Some of the ways in which this duopoly maintains its dominance is by conspiring to conceal other political options, absorb the options that grow in popularity into the duopoly, and by making the options outside the duopoly impractical to use.

Even though options exist outside of the elephants and donkeys, the duopoly deploys unfair practices to make those options impractical to choose. For example, the mainstream media often refuses to cover growing social movements and alternative political options, making it harder for people to see them or recognize them as viable alternatives. When they are covered, great lengths are taken to tie them to one of the dominant entities, as opposed to presented as an alternative.

If a party or social movement somehow breaks through, they still must content with the duopoly and, therefore, are frequently acquired- through an exchange of money in the form of grants, media attention, access to those in power (which is not the same as access to power)- and absorbed into the duopoly.

The result is that many smaller, supposedly independent, political parties fold their own candidate nomination process into that of the Democratic party. Other overtly political organizations- c4 organizations in US NGO parlance- operate as quasi-autonomous functionaries of the dominant political parties, with the Democrats absorbing the otherwise left leaning groups.

The political absorption process is uncomfortably similar to the market version. Seeking to make inroads into the soda market in India, Coca-Cola purchased and absorbed the homegrown Thumbs-up soda, leveraging its history, culture and credibility into Coke's own profit. Similarly, by absorbing Black organizations, or organizations doing work in the Black community, the history, culture and credibility of those organizations are leveraged into support for the Democratic party and away from independent centers of political power.

When third parties are able to build momentum and support, the duopoly springs into action. In the 1990s the Reform party fielded candidates over the course of several electoral cycles that cut primarily into votes that had nowhere to go but the Republican party. In the 2010s and 2020 the Green Party did the same, this time cutting into votes trapped by the Democratic side of the duopoly. In both instances, the threatened member of the duopoly used technical and legal challenges to keep third party candidates off of the ballot in swing states, forcing the smaller party to spending precious resources defending ballot access instead of engaging the public. Registration, signature, geographic and other requirements to fully appear on the ballot are intentionally onerous and unevenly applied, thereby crippling the viability of third parties.

Even worse, with a few high profile exceptions, mainstream media often do not bother reporting on third party vote counts, often rounding off duopoly voting totals, erasing their participation all-together.

Voters, of course, can independently research third party candidates that were not reported in the news and write in their names knowing that the votes will not even be properly tallied, but that is exactly the point. The roadblocks erected by the duopoly make voting third party so difficult that it was impractical because legitimate parties and their candidates were kept out of the news and off of the ballot.

Even if US elections are considered fair, in the sense that there is negligible cheating at the ballot box, they are not, by virtually any measure, free because third and fourth parties are actively prevented from gaining support through media lockouts and lack of ballot access. This is the work of the political duopoly.

## **Both Sides are Capitalist Parties**

*“The United States is also a one-party state but, with typical American extravagance, they have two of them.”*

- Julius Nyerere, first president of the decolonized Tanzania

The details of internal function aside, the critical aspect of the duopoly that must be properly understood is that the fundamental task of both the Republicans and Democrats is exactly identical, which is the protection and advancement of the imperial objectives of the US empire. The real difference between the two parties is not fundamental, but rather in the strategies they deploy to achieve their ends and the ways in which each is marketed and packaged.

Republicans are often described as pro-business and religious, contrasting with the Democrats as regulators of business and supporters of social justice. However, in 2008, 2020 and 2024, the Democratic nominee for President raised more money from Wall Street backers than did their Republican opponents and the prison industrial complex has expanded more rapidly under Democratic presidents than Republican. Popular perception of duopoly parties and candidates are merely the result of marketing gimmicks designed to create differentiators or value-propositions as a means of obfuscating the obvious.

In the same way that Coke and Pepsi on the one hand and Microsoft and Apple on the other, both sell versions of the same thing, it is so with the Republicans and Democrats: both are parties of Capitalism, White Supremacy and Patriarchy, and all that implies. As such, the fundamental task of both parties is to protect and advance the imperial objectives of the US settler-colonial empire.

Of course, each partner in duopoly differs marginally in how they deliver on the promise, but that is the very nature of soda, operating systems and political duopolies.

The duopoly as a political device, however, offers an additional benefit to the system it supports: the illusion of options and choice.

Do you want to grow the prison-industrial complex with rabid, openly racist and angry police? Or would you prefer to grow the prison-industrial complex with community policing, where the cops personally know the person they are beating and arresting?

Do you want to arrest asylum seekers and separate families with a president who demonizes immigrants and appears to enjoy causing human suffering? Or would you prefer to arrest asylum seekers and separate families with a president who speaks of immigrants in poetic terms, while deporting more of them than the guy who seems to enjoy the suffering?

Do you want asylum seekers to have no hearing at all in violation of international law or would you prefer they have a sham kangaroo court hearing with zero percent chance of success in violation of international law?

Would you prefer the genocide in Gaza to be led by a president who cheerleads the historic loss of life or one who proclaims both sides of the genocide have rights, while funding and providing lethal logistical support to only the murdering side?

Both parties grow the prison-industrial complex, deny access to asylum seekers, separate and deport immigrant families, and fully support the genocide in Gaza. That is what makes them a duopoly. The

duopolistic choices in the 2024 elections were not between genocide and no genocide, but rather between genocide with a smile and genocide with a fake look of concern and empathy.

## **Duopoly and the Illusion of Choice**

Those unclear in regards to the primary contradictions and fundamental tasks at play are susceptible to the smokescreen of false choice between one face of the system and the other. This smokescreen and illusion of choice produces additional consequences as well.

Countless organizations and individuals with deep social justice convictions- or even convictions towards liberation- are corralled into a false sense of urgency in 2 and 4 year cycles, tricked and confused by the smokescreen into spending time, money and political goodwill supporting a political party that opposes universal healthcare, fights against universal housing, and even public housing, cuts taxes to the wealthy, cuts social services to the poor, votes for more police, prisons and arrests, is fully funded by wall street and other major industries and that literally supports genocide.

To be clear: if you think the above paragraph was about Republicans, you have been confused by the smokescreen.

The fundamental contradiction lies in the system of Capitalism, White Supremacy and Patriarchy and its expressions of colonial domination, particularly against African people on the continent and across the globe. This is the system, and all of its components, must be dismantled in order to gain liberation and advance the cause of self-determination.

The dilemma for social movements inside of the US is that the effectiveness of the smokescreen of propaganda around class, race, gender and a host of peripheral issues has rendered many- included far too many on the left- unable to properly recognize the system and its many component parts. Consequently, instead of fighting against oppression, social movements spend 2 and 4 year cycles making excuses for the oppressors with the best marketing plan.

The illusion created by duopoly that there are only two choices of political expression mandates 'lesser of two evils' decision making over the maintenance of principled political positions. Due to the nature of Capitalist-White Supremacist-Patriarchal systems, lesser of two evils decision must move the political center consistently rightward over time, a tendency that can only be stopped by an outside force, specifically a left social movement on the scale of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

The end result is that leftists caught in the duopoly trap in 2024 are voting for Democrats who are to the right of the Republicans of 1980. But more on that phenomenon later.

Until we grapple with the smokescreen of the duopoly, we will be unable to even clearly see, much less confront, the underlying system of oppression. And the first step towards necessary clarity is dispatching the propaganda that the Democratic party is a viable home for the political left, recognizing them as functionaries of an oppressive system and exposing them as the 'good cop' in the confidence con.



## The Evolution of the US Duopoly

*“A fox acts friendly toward the lamb and usually the fox is the one who ends up with the Lamb Chop on his plate. The wolf doesn't act friendly and therefore the wolf has more difficulty in getting the lamb chop in his plate...”*

*... the white liberal who... differs from the white conservative in the same way that the fox differs from the wolf. Their appetite is the same. Their motives are the same. It's only their mannerisms and methods that differ.”*

- Malcolm X

There is no objective standard by which the Democratic party represents the political left. Most political scholars, certainly outside of the US, agree that the Democrats are a right wing party, with the only real debate being whether they are center-right or just plain right wing.

While Ronald Reagan defined post-Civil Rights movement conservatism in the 1980s, in 2024 the Democratic party aligns with or stands to the right of Reagan today in almost every meaningful policy category. Today, Reagan would be entirely at home in the “left” wing of the Democratic party along with Biden and Harris.

Correctly identifying today's Democrats as moving rightward implies that they were something else prior to Reagan. While this is technically true, it would be a grave error to attribute their earlier liberal policies- not left or radical, but liberal- to their own internal moral compass. The reality is that the Democratic party properly played their role as part of the duopoly designed to protect and advance the system to which they pledge allegiance.

The mass Civil Rights and Black Power movements shook American society to its core with protests, economic boycotts, calls for social equality and- gasp!- Black power. Desperate to stop the protests and economic boycotts, but completely unwilling to grant social equality or- gasp!- Black power, the US launched a two-pronged strategy intended to end the movement while protecting the core of the Capitalist, White Supremacist and Patriarchal system.

The first prong was waging a full on war against the Black Power contingent of the movement as well as the most powerful parts of the Civil Rights contingent. Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the federal government and numerous local police departments went on a killing spree, murdering more than a dozen members of the Black Panther Party and other radical organizations. Hundreds more were imprisoned on trumped up charges, some of whom remain there today, more than 50 years later.

The second prong was to acquire and absorb participants of the Civil Rights contingent into the very system they risked their lives fighting against. Civil Rights veterans were recruited to run for public office and offered jobs at corporations that a few years prior did not even want Black customers.

Brutal attacks and assassinations targeting protesters is standard operating procedure for oppressive governments, and the US was no different. Offering those it oppressed for generations the opportunity to join the very government who arrested and beat them and then murdered some their comrades, however, was a bold gambit indeed. This gambit would have been virtually impossible to pull off in Apartheid South Africa, as the National Party effectively exercised one party control and protesters there were not about to join the National Party.

But the proposition in the US context was even more complex as it not only required convincing Black people to join the oppressor's government, but the invitation had to be delivered in such a way that it did not trigger too great a backlash from the white power population. So how does an immoral, unjust government cling to power in the face of growing revolutionary movements?

Responsibilities for the execution of the two-pronged strategy were assigned to different departments of the system. On the one side, the Republicans would speak to the disgruntled white masses and even small business owners who were protested, exposed for their discriminatory practices and now forced to compete with Black and women owned business (that the other side of the government is supporting!). On the other side, the Democrats would speak to, if not for, the protesters, including feminists, queer folx and other marginalized people, as well as trade unionist, making necessary concessions (like giving grants to new Black and women owned businesses) to prevent more protests along the way.

This was the evolution of the modern day US duopoly in response to the crisis of social upheaval. Each party essentially personified one of the two prongs or strategies deployed to end the movement: crushing Black power on the one hand and acquiring and absorbing the Civil Rights movement on the other.

This point, however, must be clearly understood lest all the lessons before it be lost: At that historic juncture, the fundamental task of the Republican party was not to give voice to disaffected white workers. And the fundamental task of the Democratic party was not to support the next phase of the Civil Rights movement. The fundamental task of both parties of the duopoly was identical- to protect the US settler-colonial project and empire from the social upheaval. Each party was merely given domain over a different strategy towards the same end.

While there were other considerations at play at the time, the strategy did effectively crush Black Power and demobilize Civil Rights, redeploying them into the government and strategic business locations.

The Dems were never a leftist party, they were just the part of the duopoly charged with the demobilization of the left elements in the US using honey rather than gunfire. As a means of attracting the disaffected masses of African/Black people, women's libbers, queer folks and others, the Dems strategically created visibility for representatives of those constituencies and adopted a layer of watered-down versions of progressive positions, thereby luring former and would be protesters off the streets and corralling them into a ballot box where they could do less harm.

These new political positions were disingenuous, but had a real impact on both protesters and long time white Democrats. The protesters were fooled into thinking they had a real partner in a position of power and, therefore, shifted their energies from protesting unjust systems to fighting inexplicable bureaucracies inside of the Democratic party machine.

The long time white Democrats were fooled into thinking that the party was less committed to white people and, therefore, angrily stomped into a newly revived Republican party where they dominate to this day. Ronald Reagan would frequently recall how those changes in the Democratic party, of which he as then a member, made him feel like he did not leave the Democratic party, but that the party left him.

But after the elite capture of Civil Rights leaders and participants, the Democrats slowly but surely drifted back to their original and true form. The tax cuts and explosion of the prison industrial complex of the Clinton years. The mass deportations and attacks on Africa during the Obama administration. And all of the above during the Biden-Harris term.

All the while, powerful Black social movements were completely demobilized and reconstituted as appendages of the Democratic party, a trend which continues presently. This is the role of the Democratic party in the US.

## **2020 Campaign**

While running for office in 2020, Biden and Harris brutally criticized Trump for his immigration policies, specifically his proposal to build a wall on the US Southern border and the policy of family separation of undocumented migrants. He was called inhumane and un-American, even though America has done the same, and worse, for generations. They also failed to mention that the Obama administration actually started the practice of family separation, albeit in a more limited scope. Once in office, Biden and Harris continued to build the wall and continued to separate families at the border.

In the interview room, the ‘good’ cop brings you the soda expresses empathy with you and your situation. He says he wants to help you and keep the ‘bad’ cop from yelling and cursing at you again- or doing worse- because that guy just cannot be controlled. And in the interview room, the ‘good’ cop is the one who lowers your defenses and gets you to talk without your lawyer.

The Democrat criticisms of the Trump policies were and are disingenuous. Both parts of the duopoly want to build the wall and punish migrants in order to drive down wages, thereby increasing profits for the bosses. But these kinds of policies are far more difficult to implement if they only come off as evil. As such, it is the job of one half of the duopoly to make us think they are on our side, and only the other half of the duopoly is the bad one.

## **The Harris Campaign**

Harris, and Biden before her, ran campaigns entirely based on Trump’s obvious character flaws, including his impetuousness, penchant for graft and lack of intellectual acumen. However, aside from a short list of issues- such as abortion access- what they did not do was run on a contrast of policy positions.

This is not to suggest Trump ran a competent campaign. He held rallies in states where his appearance would not effect the outcome, after an initial round of disciplined messaging he reverted to his natural

environment of personal insults and public sexual remarks, and outsourced key campaign functions- like voter outreach- and personally pocketed the difference.

But while the Democratic party itself is not left, the base of the party is comprised significantly of left leaning and potentially left forces trapped in the capitalist party duopoly. But instead of appealing to the majority of the base by making promises about liberal leaning social programs and foreign policy- even if those promises were disingenuous- Harris accelerated the donkey trot rightward.

Harris visited the Southern wall promising to continue the build, rejected calls for expanded social safety net and refused to criticize, much less cut funding for, an ongoing Genocide prosecuted by Israel and funded by Harris' own administration.

She campaigned extensively with far right wing hawk and former congresswoman Liz Cheney, as well as a few billionaires and right wing celebrities who are critical of Trump. Harris notably did not appear in public with the left wing of her own party, such as Senator Bernie Sanders. She committed to including a Republican in her administration, but made no such promise to members of the Green Party, even though she feared that a substantial chunk of voters would flee the Dems and vote Green. She did not even promise to include progressive Democrats in her administration! Harris offered no substantive policy concessions to the liberal or left of even her own party.

Harris framed her closing argument around Trump's threat to democracy. However, for adherents to the so-called White Replacement Theory, wherein whites will soon represent an electoral minority, the subversion of democracy is a key strategy in the defense of white power. Harris' closing argument as to why they should vote against Trump was identical to the white supremacist argument as to why they should vote for him.

By any objective measure, Kamala Harris is a right wing politician whose campaign strategy was to ignore the pleas of her left-ish base and shift even further to the right in order to compete with an actual fascist. The strategy, developed by the collective brainpower of the Democrats, spoke volumes about the party. There is simply no objective measure by which the Democrats are left or a viable home for left leaning political actors.

## **Vote Count**

In 2016, Trump won the presidency with just 62.9 million votes, even though he had fewer votes than his opponent, Hillary Clinton. But following a disastrous term in office and constant, though well deserved, attacks from the mainstream media, Trump actually increased his vote tally to 74.2 million in his 2020 losing campaign. Four years later, after multiple indictments, criminal convictions and wildly embarrassing headlines, Trump increased his tally again, this time up to 77.1 million votes in 2024.

In 2020 the Biden-Harris ticket scored a record 81.2 million votes, including many from actual leftists voting out of fear that a Mussolini like figure, steeped in fascism and likely to support a genocide, might win. But after 4 years in power and constant political shifts to the right- but never to left- in 2024 Harris secured just 74.7 million votes, a net loss of almost 7 million votes.

In spite of the alternative being Donald Trump, an actual and literal fascist, millions of people were so repulsed with the right wing tendencies of the Democratic party and disgusted by the genocidal work of Biden and Harris, they refused to vote for her. Millions more voted for Harris while holding their nose, motivated solely by a fear of Trump rather than the appeals of the Democratic party.

Worse still, leftists who feared a fascist likely to support genocide squandered their political voice by voting for a right wing ticket who did, in fact, actively support a genocide.

## **Duopoly in Decline**

It is critical to note that those millions of votes did not shift to Trump, they merely held fast in their rejection of the marketing gimmick trying to convince that the Democratic party somehow represents left politics.

With no substantive policy differences between them, the Democratic party had nothing to offer working class whites in terms of jobs, healthcare and standards of living. Consequently, working class whites settled for the party who spoke to their social angst even if not their material needs. But once the GOP is firmly in power and the anti-Black, immigrant, queer and trans rhetoric does no result in improved living conditions, working class whites will face their own reckoning.

The smokescreen is dissipating before our eyes, slowly revealing a pathetic wiz whose primary power is the ability to project smokescreens designed to sow confusion and prevent organization. Consequently a growing number of African/Black people are turning away from the Democratic party and many more are raising real questions about the duopoly.

The duopoly is in rapid decay and decline for at least two reasons.

First, the marketing and propaganda around the two parties is falling short. Large segments of the left still vote for the Dems, but those votes are primarily driven by fear of W. Bush, McCain, Romney and now Trump. Sure the fear is working, but no one on the left believes in any word uttered by any Democratic politician. The Black community as a whole has never completely trusted the Democrats, but had no viable alternatives. Today there is more grumbling and a marked decline in enthusiasm for the party.

But second and more importantly, capitalist duopolies unchecked by left social movements will destroy themselves.

As mentioned earlier, duopolies under capitalism will always march rightward. The right will march right and so will the 'left.' Those are not only their more natural positions, when not forced by social movements, but part of demobilizing a left constituency is attempting to make them more conservative. Research the Democratic party platform and campaign promises in 1976 and compare them to today. There is a constant, non-stop and determined march rightward.

But in the same way that nothing can go up forever, and profits cannot always rise, how can the political center always drift right?

As a hypothetical thought experiment, let's quantify the political center of 1980 point as '0' on a graph with Reagan's Republicans as '10' to the right and Carter's Democrats as '-10' to the left. There are a number of reasons why this model is inaccurate, but for the purposes of this experiment, it is so. By the end of this term, the new Reagan moved from 10 to the right to 15 and instead of holding fast to even liberal positions, the new Democrats shifted rightward to catch up and are now at 0, with the new political center at 5.

If some version of this hypothetical is accurate, it would not be too terribly long before the scale hit a logic problem: the new Democrats will eventually hit 15 to the right, which means the new Democrats- the left wing of the system- is to the right of the previous position of the right wing.

At this point one of two phenomenons must take root:

First, the left recognizes that the Democrats are actually right wing, in spite of the propaganda. More germane here, once the party whose strategic role is to appeal to leftist elements in a society moves further to the right than the original position of the party whose strategic role is to appeal to those elements in society on the right, the duopoly as a functional system of control is in collapse. The left-right or good cop-bad cop dynamic dissipates and the duopoly dissolves under decay.

The second potential phenomenon is that the right wing moves so far to the right, that they are now full stop fascists. Of course full fascists are not as sophisticated as liberal Western democracies and, therefore, disdain duopolies and will stop nothing short of a one-party state. The far right continues to win, becomes all out fascists and implodes the duopoly from within.

We are staring at the end of the duopoly. But that does not necessarily mean things will get better.

## Implications of this Moment for Movement Building

*"Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children."*

- Amilcar Cabral

As movement scientists, we must rigorously examine the implications of these developments for organizing and movement building.

The first observation of note is that just because the Dems are losing does not mean that we are winning. It is no forgone conclusion that those disillusioned by the Democrats will necessarily move firmly to the left and into liberatory organizing structures.

A precarious economy and rapidly changing social norms, particularly around issues of gender and inter-communal social hierarchies, can leave people disoriented and longing for more familiar surroundings, even when those surroundings were objectively bad. As such, even African/Black people are susceptible to unchallenged scapegoating of immigrants, even Black ones, women and the entire rainbow of queer

folx, peeling layers of potential comrades away from movement and into the arms of reactionary forces. The shrinking Democrat base does not necessarily translate into a growth of revolutionary forces.

The correlating observation is in the form of a hard truth: however accurate, compelling or forceful the rhetoric, social movements cannot convince millions of African/Black people to leave the Democratic party. We can only convince them to join our own organizations, parties and movement.

In the same way that many facing difficult home lives can be reluctant to leave when they have nowhere else to go, many are slow to leave their political home, even when it is abusive, to move into a political void. But even among those rightfully disgusted and brave enough to leave their political home, a lack of ideological clarity could render them in a worse condition than prior to their escape.

At this moment when millions are questioning their allegiance to a system exposed as corrupt, revolutionary organizations are presented with a generational opportunity to deliver correct political theory and analysis to newly receptive ears. The same people who were deeply offended by radical analysis of Barack Obama in 2008 are delivering their own offensive analysis in 2024 while raising critical questions about the duopoly, even if they are not using the term. This is the moment to bring clear analysis and theory to our friends, neighbors and community.

But while correct political theory is a necessary prerequisite to building a revolutionary movement, theory alone is woefully inadequate because the people do not fight for ideas in our heads, they fight for bread and matches.

## **Build Dual Power**

*“Dreams and reality are opposites. Action synthesizes them.”*

— Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*

As previously noted, most people cannot be convinced to just leave the Democratic party. They can only be convinced to join something better. It is the sacred task of organizers and movement scientists to create a political home and place for those people.

The collapsing duopoly offers movement organizations the opportunity to increase membership exponentially and build a viable revolutionary movement. This is an opportunity not just to question the duopoly, but to build a movement.

People will join movements that do three things: First, accurately critiques the dominant system and its important components and players. Second, articulates a vision of a just society and a better world that inspires the masses to action. And third, demonstrates the ability and capacity to turn those visions into reality.

Our burden extend beyond critiques of the duopoly and into the realm of envisioning what a new and just world might look like and how principles of socialism can work today and in the remnants of this

society. But even after this articulation, our burden extends even further, as we must demonstrate to the suffering masses that we have the ability to end that suffering by taking power. This is no light burden.

Such demonstration of capacity cannot wait until after we win, so we must begin today by building our own alternative structures designed to solve the problems our people confront and improve the conditions our people endure. We must build Dual Power structures capable of competing with the duopoly for the political attention, engagement and loyalty of our people.

In the mid 1960s, a growing mountain of evidence connected physical, emotional and intellectual development in children to access to healthy breakfast before school. In the face of overt, rampant and severe oppression, radical thinkers correctly argued that African/Black children did not randomly 'lack access' to breakfast, but were structurally denied such access in what were stinging critiques of the US. A smaller subset of activists took it a step further and articulated a vision of the world where breakfast for children was not a function of race, gender or class status, but a human right that, along with others, must be available to all.

These critiques and articulations, however, did not win the masses of people into movement. That only occurred when the Black Panther Party launched the Free Breakfast Program, feeding inner city children food and political ideology while also providing meaningful work for the formerly incarcerated and other chronically unemployed sectors of our community.

The Panthers won large swaths of our community away from the Democrat side of the duopoly and into revolutionary politics and organization. This was not accomplished just through critique and envisioning, but by building Dual Power structures that operated outside of the duopoly and serving as proof of concept for the abstract theory of Black Power.

Today, more than ever, African/Black people are looking for an excuse to go somewhere other than the Democratic party or the other side of the duopoly. It is the task of revolutionary organizations to demonstrate that viable and functional alternatives exist.

Our theory and programs must be firmly rooted in class analysis. And even as we adjust our strategies and tactics to rise to the changing conditions and adapt to the musical chairs of parties, elected officials and political tricks, our analysis must reveal that the underlying system is the same and, therefore, our overall mission and objectives do not waiver.

But to win people over the long haul, we must build the organizational infrastructure and systems required to deliver quality of life improvements over time, required to demonstrate the capacity to take power and govern effectively.

As the duopoly crumbles under it's own weight and tendencies, we must present the people with viable alternatives that they can come to, not just bogeymen- even though they are very real- that they must escape. The best way to stop the duopoly is to build organizational infrastructure and Dual Power.

Forward.