

New York University student paper joins in “anti-Semitism” witch-hunt against critics of Israel

By Josh Varlin and Sandy English
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On March 7, the *Washington Square News* (WSN), New York University’s student newspaper, removed from its website a witch-hunting article published on March 5 that equated criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, and criticism of the Trump administration with fascistic violence. The article began, “Women’s March Co-Chair and accused anti-Semite Linda Sarsour is set to speak at Skirball [Center for the Performing Arts] later this month,” and continued from there to accuse Sarsour of “anti-Semitism” on the basis of a crude amalgam because one of Sarsour’s co-chairs attended an event where Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan gave an anti-Semitic speech.

The only NYU student quoted by the WSN’s original article is a representative from TorchPAC, a Zionist club. Based on the flimsy claim that Sarsour is an anti-Semite because an associate attended an anti-Semitic speech, the WSN likens Sarsour to fascistic street gang leader Gavin McInnes and far-right provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos. There was no statement from the Asian/Pacific/American Institute at NYU, which invited Sarsour to speak, nor was it reported that Sarsour’s speech, on refugees and immigration, is co-sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace.

WSN Editor-in-Chief Sakshi Venkatraman admitted the piece “was written with a clear bias” and “was sensationalist and wrong.” Venkatraman also acknowledged that the comparison to McInnes and Yiannopoulos “was clearly a reach—and disrespectful.”

NYU students were quick to oppose the original article. One comment on the original Facebook post said, “... didn’t think this publication could get shittier

but here you are equating feminist/human rights icon with capital N Nazis.”

Another said, “Absolute bullshit that WSN is actively pushing the whole ‘anti-israel=anti semitism’ thing when Jews and Palestinians on campus have been tirelessly disputing this. For each step NYU students take forward, WSN takes two back.”

NYU student activists have criticized WSN for perceived bias in favor of the administration and against activists.

The decision by several editors to green-light this scurrilous article came amid a right-wing campaign against Representative Ilhan Omar for pointing out the influence of the Zionist lobby in Congress. There is a similar campaign in the UK against Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, which also seeks to tar any criticism of Israel or of capitalism as anti-Semitic.

This cat was let out of the bag when an anti-Corbyn Labour MP, Siobhain McDonagh, responded in the affirmative to a question posed to her by a BBC reporter: “In other words, to be anti-capitalist you have to be anti-Semitic?”

Corbyn was physically assaulted on March 3 amid this hysterical campaign.

The past year has also seen criticism of Sarsour and two other Women’s March co-chairs based on alleged anti-Semitism, spearheaded by right-wing Zionist publications and CNN journalist Jake Tapper. After the WSN article was taken down, the *New York Observer*, formerly owned by President Donald Trump’s son-in-law and White House adviser Jared Kushner, attacked NYU for the planned Skirball event along the same lines.

The *World Socialist Web Site* does not share the

political views of Sarsour, whose activism is well within the Democratic Party. However, the attempt to brand her as an anti-Semite is a vicious right-wing slander. She has repeatedly, forthrightly and explicitly condemned anti-Semitism on social media and has worked with liberal Jewish organizations. The evidence of “anti-Semitism” cited by her critics consists of her legitimate criticisms of Israel and Zionism, the guilt-by-association of her co-chair’s ties to the Nation of Islam, and her appearing at the 20th anniversary of the Million Man March (which included Farrakhan, Jesse Jackson and the mothers of Sandra Bland and Trayvon Martin).

The campaign against bogus “left-wing anti-Semitism,” now rearing its head at NYU, has a broader significance. As the WSWWS has noted:

A central aim of this campaign is to fabricate a supposed growth of “left-wing anti-Semitism,” in large part to divert attention from the actual cultivation of far-right and neo-fascist forces, many of which are openly anti-Semitic, by capitalist governments from the Trump White House in the US to Macron in France, the grand coalition government in Germany and the far-right Netanyahu government in Israel itself. ...

This campaign actually provides fuel for the very real and dangerous growth of anti-Semitism. To the extent that the Jewish people are identified with the crimes of the Israeli state and criticism of Israel is equated with anti-Semitism, ordinary Jews are made more vulnerable to fascist efforts to whip up anti-Jewish sentiment.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at NYU condemns the bogus campaign to equate legitimate opposition to Zionism, the Israeli state and capitalism with anti-Semitism.

The growth of far-right and fascist movements, including the revival of anti-Semitism, poses immense danger to the working class worldwide. The neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the anti-immigrant ravings of Trump are closely associated with the reemergence of real anti-Semitism whose function, now as in the 1930s, is to redirect opposition to the

status quo along racist and nationalist lines.

The article in the *Washington Square News* against Sarsour, the attempts to smear as anti-Semitic Corbyn and his followers in the Labour Party and the Democratic Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, by the Democratic Party itself, only serve to mask the fact that state actors, including the Netanyahu regime in Israel, are making alliances with and cultivating the most right-wing and fascist forces.

The IYSSE has been in the forefront of the struggle against the rise of fascism and clarifying its social roots and the methods of fighting it.

At Humboldt University in Berlin and at other German universities, the IYSSE has combated the ideological rearming of German imperialism and the rehabilitation of Hitler by extreme right-wing professors such as Jörg Baberowski and his allies in the university administration.

The IYSSE will be presenting this struggle to NYU students, faculty and staff at a significant event in April featuring Christoph Vandreier, author of *Why Are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy and the Return of Fascism in Germany*. We urge everyone seeking to oppose the genuine rise of fascist and anti-Semitic tendencies to attend our meeting, “The Threat of Fascism and How to Fight It,” on Thursday, April 18, at 6:30 p.m., in Lecture Hall 95 of the Global Center at NYU.

For more information on the IYSSE at New York University, visit our Facebook page or contact us at iysse@socialequality.com.

Organizing this meeting series entails substantial costs. The IYSSE is not funded by the banks and corporations or wealthy non-governmental organizations. If you believe this meeting series is important, donate as much as you can to pay for international travel, printing, promotion and other costs.

To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>