



Left Strategy As 2020 Looms: Discussion Questions

Below are ten discussion questions that can be used by study groups or in workshops taking up the content of recent articles in Organizing Upgrade by Karen Nussbaum, Anthony Thigpenn and Jon Liss, Claire Tran and Jacob Swenson-Lengyel, Van Gosse, the Organizing Upgrade Editors, and an interview with Maurice Mitchell. Depending on interest and the time available for discussion, participants could use just one question, all ten, or any combination in between to kick off a conversation. Organizing Upgrade would love to hear your collective thinking as well as individual opinions. Please consider posting your thoughts as comments on our site and/or facebook page!

1. Numerous articles in this collection argue that it is essential to defeat Trump in the 2020 balloting. Why? Do you think the threat of a Trump second term is of a different character than the threat from the last few Republican administrations? If so, how would you agitate for/explain the difference?
2. In his [interview with Organizing Upgrade](#), Maurice Mitchell goes into detail about the strategy, internal dynamics and challenges facing the Working Families Party. What do you see as the role of a left independent political party in electoral strategy? How should it relate to the Democratic Party? How can it best relate to other mass organizations, left organizations and to unorganized individuals? Is a closer alignment of the different progressive groups engaging the elections desirable, and if so, is the Working Families Party a likely vehicle for such an alignment?
3. In regard to the idea of a "[progressive front](#)" in the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination, how significant do you think the differences are between Sanders and Warren? What about the differences between both of them and Biden? Do you think a partnership between their supporters is possible and/or desirable? Or do you agree with those who argue that Bernie is the only candidate deserving of left support in the primary? And if Bernie is not the eventual nominee, what posture should the left take if it is Warren? Or if it is someone else?
4. Several articles argue that the left should be an active participant in a broad electoral front against Trump no matter who the Democratic nominee for president is, and that contention with conservative or corporate Democrats should be in the context of this broader alignment. Do you think this is a strategy that can lead to strengthening the left as well as beating Trump? How can the left avoid being chewed up and split up in the process?

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5. Karen Nussbaum [writes that](#) "In 2018, 8 percent of Trump voters voted for a Democrat for Congress, but 38 percent of Trump voters who were Working America members voted for a congressional Democrat." What do you think was effective about Working America's message and/or approach that yielded this kind of result? Do you think canvassing is a good place for the left to put its energy and resources? If so, what sector(s) would you target?
6. Anthony Thigpenn and Jon Liss [say that](#) "building left-oriented state-based power as a counter to both corporate and far-right agendas" is a strategic imperative. What do you see as the relationship between fighting for power at the state, local and national level? What is the situation your state? Are there organizations in the State Power Caucus or others pursuing the strategy Thigpenn and Liss describe? What are prospects for making a breakthrough in such an effort?
7. What is the role of mass direct action - demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience - between now and 2020? Should this be a left priority? What would it take to spark a massive mobilization on the scale of the first Women's March? Should the left argue for getting into the streets demanding impeachment or a Trump-defeat at the polls, and/or calling for a Green New Deal, to close the concentration camps at the border, or for some other issue or combination of issues?
8. What is the importance of down-ballot races? How important is flipping the Senate and winning more seats in the House? How would you approach the election in a Red State vs. a Blue State or a Battleground state? How does the reality that the electoral college decides the election fit in to left strategy?
9. There is a significant difference of opinion on what the left's stance on impeachment should be between the [article by](#) Claire Tran and Jacob Swenson-Lengyel and [the statement](#) by the DSA National Political Committee linked to in their article. What do you think of the arguments on the two sides? How do you think leftists should relate to this fight?
10. Van Gosse [writes that](#) there are important lessons for today in the process of party disintegration and re-composition leading up to the Civil War. What things in the structure of US politics have changed and what things have not since that time? How do race and racism fit into the argument Gosse makes? Do you weigh the "challenges and opportunities" of the current moment in way similar to Gosse, or do you see the mix differently?