



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

## COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

24 June 2016

Sisters and Brothers from the National Education Workers Coordinating Committee,

Please accept my deepest condolences and solidarity to the families, friends, and students of the CNTE workers who have been murdered, injured, or taken prisoner in recent days by the neoliberal government of Peña Nieto. This government will clearly stop at nothing in its efforts to impose its education reform law and big business agenda onto ordinary workers in Mexico.

I write not only as a member of the Seattle City Council, but as a teacher, an activist, a socialist, and a proud rank and file union member of the American Federation of Teachers Local 1789.

There are many thousands of teachers, students, and workers in Seattle and across the United States who value and appreciate your courageous protests against an education reform law that open teachers and their unions up to arbitrary attacks. We stand in solidarity with you and your struggle.

Public education has experienced massive budget cuts in the United States over the last several years. Standardized tests are being used to evaluate teachers and defund public schools. Democrats and Republicans - both serving big business - are aggressively pushing for charter schools to privatize public education and weaken public sector unions.

Following the economic collapse of 2007-2008, Wall Street and the big banks that caused the crisis received trillions in bailouts, while millions of teachers and other public sector workers saw their wages frozen, their hours increased with no extra pay, and their health care and pension plans cut. Here in Washington state, the Supreme Court has ruled that the state Democratic and Republican legislature has criminally underfunded public schools. That same legislature has given away tens of billions of dollars to the executives of corporations like Boeing.

But just like in Mexico, workers here are fighting back. Last September, teachers in Seattle went on strike, led by their union, the Seattle Education Association (SEA). Thanks to the determination of the SEA and widespread community support, they won their first cost of living adjustment in years and stopped the school district from being able to use standardized tests to evaluate teacher performance.

I won election to the Seattle City Council as a socialist and a fighter for the interests of working people, without taking any campaign money from big business. I only take home the average worker's wage, and donate the rest of my six-figure Council salary to social movements.

I walked on the picket line with SEA teachers during their strike, and held a public rally at City Hall to increase community support for the strike. I also passed a resolution getting the whole Seattle City Council to support the strike, and I donated to the SEA strike fund.

Sisters and brothers, I know that your struggle has been long and painful, especially in recent days. But it is not in vain. We know that you are not only fighting to defeat the government's harmful education

reforms. You are at the forefront of the struggle against the entire neoliberal agenda of the Peña Nieto government and the Mexican ruling class.

The cruelty of the ruling class reflects a deep fundamental weakness. The capitalist system is bankrupt. They control most of the government, the military, and the police for now. But their system of greed and profit condemns most working people in Mexico, indeed across the entire world, to a life of poverty and insecurity, even though we are the ones who make society run. In order for the super-rich to maintain their control, they need workers to be disorganized, divided, without militant unions, to feel hopeless, and convinced there is no point in fighting back.

Your struggle is an inspiration to so many because you are proof that working people can fight back against big business, and that this better world, based on solidarity, human need, and social justice, is possible.

To defend against the ruthless attacks that are inevitable under capitalism, working people need to get organized into unions and form independent left political forces like Morena. Our only chance for a decent life rests on our ability to build a movement strong enough to rid ourselves of the shackles of capitalism, to create a socialist world where workers earn living wages, health care and education are free, all forms of discrimination are abolished, and we make massive investments in alternative energy infrastructure to stop climate change.

I bring greetings from teachers and working people in Seattle. We will continue following your struggle closely. My office is working with the Seattle Chapter of Morena, the Socialist Alternative party, and others to organize protests at the Mexican consulate in Seattle planned for this weekend. Once again, my condolences for the tragic loss of so many of our brothers and sisters in struggle. I am profoundly grateful for the fight you are waging for us all.

!Solidarity and Hasta la Victoria Siempre!



Kshama Sawant  
Seattle City Councilmember from the Socialist Alternative party