

# An Open Letter to the Green Party for 2020, Noam Chomsky et al. A Reply to the Open Letter by Jack Rasmus

By [Noam Chomsky](#), [Barbara Ehrenreich](#), [Bill Fletcher Jr.](#), et al., and [Dr. Jack Rasmus](#)

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Region: [USA](#)  
Theme: [History](#)

We are posting the [Open Letter to the Green Party for 2020](#), followed by a response by Jack Rasmus.

The purpose is to encourage a useful and constructive debate as well as dialogue.

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## An Open Letter to the Green Party for 2020

by

**Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, Bill Fletcher, Leslie Cagan, Ron Daniels, Kathy Kelly, Norman Solomon, Cynthia Peters and Michael Albert**

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[Truthdig](#), January 24, 2019

As the 2020 presidential election approaches the Green Party faces the challenge of settling on a platform, choosing a candidate for president, and deciding its campaign strategy. In that context, Howie Hawkins, a contender for Green Party presidential candidate, recently published a clear and cogent essay titled "The Green Party Is Not the Democrats' Problem." It represents a precedent Green Party stance which may guide Green campaign policy. We agree with much, but find some ideas very troubling.

The stance offered in Hawkins' article says "the assertion that the Green Party spoiled the 2000 and 2016 elections is a shallow explanation for the Democrats' losses;" that in 2000, "the Supreme Court...stopped the Florida recount;" that many factors "elected Trump in 2016...including black voter suppression, Comey publicly reopening the Clinton email case a week before the election, \$6 billion of free publicity for Trump from the commercial media, and a Clinton campaign that failed to get enough of its Democratic base out;" that the Electoral College "gave the presidency to the loser of the popular vote;" that most Greens are "furious" at a Democratic party "that joins with Republicans to support domestic austerity and a bloated military budget and endless wars;" "that the Green Party's Green New Deal science-based timeline, would put the country on a World War II scale emergency footing to transform the economy to zero greenhouse gas emissions and 100% clean energy

by 2030;" and that "the Green Party want(s) to eliminate poverty and radically reduce inequality" including a job guarantee, a guaranteed income above poverty, affordable housing, improved Medicare for all, lifelong public education from pre-K through college, and a secure retirement;" and finally that the Green Party strategy "is to build the party from the bottom up by electing thousands to municipal and county offices, state legislatures, and soon the House as we go into the 2020s."

We agree that many factors led to Democratic Party losses and that the Supreme Court was a big one as was the Electoral College, and we too are furious at Democrats joining Republicans in so many violations of justice and peace. Likewise, we admire the Greens' Green New Deal and economic justice commitments, and also support a grassroots, local office approach to winning electoral gains.

So with all that agreement, why are we sending a critical open letter?

The stance the article presents, which may guide the Green campaign for president, says, "To hold all other factors (contributing to recent Presidential victories) constant and focus on the Green Party as the deciding factor is a hypothetical that is a logical fallacy because it assumes away a factual reality: the Green Party is here to stay." However, our finding Green policy a factor in Republican victories in no way suggests that the Green Party should disappear. And our focus on factors within our reach to easily correct (for example, the Green Party role in contested states) is in fact sensible.

The stance also says "the Green Party is not why the Democrats lost to Bush and Trump," but even if true, that wouldn't demonstrate it won't be why this time. In any case, let's take Trump and Clinton, and see how Green Party policy mattered.

If Clinton got Jill Stein's Green votes in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan, Clinton would have won the election. Thus, the Green Party's decision to run in those states, saying even that there was little or no difference between Trump and Clinton, seems to us to be a factor worthy of being removed from contested state dynamics, just like the Electoral College is a factor worthy of being removed across all states.

We realize many and perhaps most Greens will respond that if those who voted for Stein in contested states in 2016 hadn't done so, they would have abstained. We don't know how anyone could know that, but for the sake of argument we will suppose it is correct.

Still, if these voters who preferred Stein did indeed erroneously believe that there was no difference between Trump and Clinton, surely to some degree that was a result of Stein refusing to acknowledge the special danger of Trump, and insisting that while it would be bad if Trump won it would also be bad if Clinton won, and refusing to state any preference.

Similarly, if these Stein voters did indeed erroneously believe that no harm could come from casting a vote for Stein in a close state in a close election, that also to some degree was surely a result of Green campaigning insisting that Green voters bore no responsibility for the 2000 election result.

And finally, if these voters did indeed erroneously believe that it was immoral to contaminate themselves by voting for Clinton or for a Democrat, surely in part that too was encouraged by Green campaigning that treated voting as a feel-good activity ("vote your hopes, not your fears") as if fear of climate disaster, for example, shouldn't be a motivator

for political action.

The stance says, “The Green Party is not going back to the ‘safe states strategy’ that a faction of it attempted in 2004.” This means they will not forgo running in contested states where Green votes could swing the outcome as happened in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan in 2016, and they will not run in only 40 safe states where the outcome will be a foregone conclusion.

But why reject a safe states strategy?

Like Stein in 2016, some might claim doing so can’t help Trump win again or, in any case, that Trump’s re-election would not matter all that much. “He isn’t that much worse.”

We write in hopes that no one in 2020 will rationalize campaign actions by making such irresponsible and patently false claims.

And, indeed, in his recent essay, Hawkins instead claimed a safe states strategy “couldn’t even be carried out. It alienated Greens in swing states who were working so hard to overcome onerous petitioning requirements to get the party on the ballot. Keeping the party on the ballot for the next election cycle for their local candidates depended on the Green presidential vote in many states. It became clear that safe states was dispiriting and demoralizing because the party didn’t take itself seriously enough to justify its existence independent of the Democrats. Few people, even in the safe states, wanted to waste their vote for a Green ticket that was more concerned with electing the Democratic ticket than advancing its own demands.”

This claims there is a price the Green Party has to pay for a safe states strategy. Okay, let’s take that as gospel. Where is an argument that this price is so great that avoiding it outweighs the price everyone, including Greens, will pay for re-electing Trump?

We have no way to assess the claim that Greens would find it dispiriting to remove themselves as a factor that might abet global catastrophe via a Trump re-election. But wouldn’t Trump out of office much less Sanders or Warren in office not only benefit all humanity and a good part of the biosphere to boot, but also the Green Party? For that matter, weren’t more potential Green Party members and voters driven off by the party’s dismissal of the dangers of Trump than were inspired by it? Which grew more in the last four years, DSA or the Greens?

And weren’t the Greens in the late ’80s and early ’90s winning elections to city councils and other local offices across the country, consistent with a grass roots strategy, though for much of the past 20 years, they’ve largely abandoned local and state contests, devoting nearly all their attention to increasingly harmful races for president? Hawkins’ own exemplary races for Senate and Governor in New York state, and especially the Greens’ successful mayoral races in politically important places like Richmond, CA, as well as less visible ones like New Paltz, NY, were exceptions, but how many Greens have used their hard-won ballot access to run for Congress or state legislature? Might the massive focus on presidential elections mark a decline in prospects for the localist strategy, not an advance for it?

We are told, “Greens want to get Trump out as much as anybody” but how can that be if Greens would vote for a Green candidate, and not for Sanders, Warren, or any Democrat in

a contested state knowing that doing so could mean Trump's victory?

If during the 2020 election campaign, the Green candidate campaigns in contested states knowing that he or she might be winning votes that would otherwise have gone to Sanders or to Warren or whoever, causing Trump to win the state and win the electoral college, how could that possibly evidence wanting Trump to lose as much as anyone?

Indeed, if a Green candidate weren't telling everyone who was a potential Green voter to vote for Trump's opponent in contested states, how could that evidence that Greens want Trump to lose as much as anyone?

Let us put our question another way. It is election night 2020. The vote tallies are in. Which way would the 2020 Green candidate feel better? Trump wins and the Green candidate gets 250,000 votes across the contested states, more than enough for Sanders, Warren, or whoever to have won? Or, Trump loses and the Green candidate gets no votes in the contested states, but a bunch extra in other states as a result of having more time for campaigning there?

Greens tell Democrats "to stop worrying about the Green Party and focus on getting your own base out." We agree on the importance of Democrats getting their base out, starting with nominating Sanders, or, at worst, Warren. But how does that warrant the Green Party risking contributing to Trump winning?

The stance asks, "So why are we running a presidential ticket in 2020 if our strategy is to build the party from the bottom up?" The stance answers, "Because Greens need ballot lines to run local candidates. Securing ballot lines for the next election cycle is affected by the petition signatures and/or votes for our presidential ticket in 40 of the states."

Greens will pay a price for not running in contested states. Our advice to Greens would be to notice the infinitely bigger price that millions and even billions of people will pay for Trump winning.

The stance says "Greens don't spoil elections. We improve them. We advance solutions that otherwise won't get raised. We are running out of time on the climate crisis, inequality, and nuclear weapons. Greens will be damned if we wait for the Democrats. Real solutions can't wait."

But real solutions require Trump out of office. Real solutions will become far more probable with Sanders or Warren in office. Real solutions will become somewhat more probable even with the likes of Biden in office.

To conclude, is a Green candidate running for President after the summer really going to argue we shouldn't vote for Sanders in contested states not just to end Trumpism but also to enact all kinds of important changes including urging and facilitating grass roots activism and thereby advancing Green program?

We offer this open letter in hopes of prodding discussion of the issues raised.

[Response by Jack Rasmus](#)

# You Can Trust 'Left Liberals' to be Liberals First (and Left Last): A Reply to Chomsky & Friends' Open Letter

by

[Jack Rasmus](#)

January 28, 2020

*This past weekend a group best identified as 'left liberal' intellectuals posted an 'Open Letter' to the Green Party charging that party with being responsible for Hillary Clinton's loss in 2016. They then declared that the Green Party's 2020 presidential candidate, Howie Hawkins, should not run in 2020, lest the Greens become responsible for getting Trump re-elected again. Everything should be done to ensure that a Democrat Party candidate, whomever that might be, should win in 2020. That includes even Joe Biden, they say. Left liberals like themselves should simply 'hold their noses' and vote for Biden, if necessary, if he gets the nomination.*

For someone like yours truly who has been around and seen the same strategy of 'lesser evilism' repeated for a half century now—with devastating consequences even when the lesser evil (aka Democrats) won the presidency—it is not surprising to read and hear the 'left liberals' lament once again!

The coterie signatories of the 'open letter' include: Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, Bill Fletcher, Leslie Cagan, Ron Daniels, Kathy Kelly, Norman Solomon, Cynthia Peters and Michael Albert.

Their main argument, calling for Hawkins and the Greens to retreat from the 2020 electoral field (and for the record I am not a Green party member or a member of any other party), is that Hillary lost the swing states of Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, etc. to Trump in 2016 but would have won them—and thus the electoral college vote—if only those who voted for the Greens presidential candidate, Jill Stein, in the swing states had not done so but voted instead for Hillary.

It's really a logically weak argument that one would think such 'power intellectuals on the left' would be hesitant to pen their name to it out of concern they would have insulted themselves to their audience. But they have.

The argument fails not only on the facts but on the amateur assumptions on which it also rests.



First, logically it is juvenile in that it assumes that those who voted for the Greens in 2016 in these swing states would have voted for Hillary, had there not been a Green candidate on the ballot. Its hidden assumption is that all of those Green votes would have voted Hillary had Jill Stein not run. That these assumptions are nonsense is self evident.

Clearly those who voted Green did so because they couldn't stand Hillary, or knew of her record, or understood that a vote for Hillary would have meant a vote for war as well as more of the same failed economic policies of the Bill Clinton-Obama era that created the real conditions that gave rise to Trump.

The Green vote in the swing states would not have gone to Hillary. Those who voted Green would have instead stayed home and not voted or would have written in some other candidate. Most Greens are Green because they've come to understand what the Democrats in the era of Neoliberalism really stand for, both in domestic and foreign policy: escalating income inequality, precarious jobs, stagnant wages, unaffordable healthcare, poverty in retirement, rising rents, continuous wars, incessant tax cuts for the rich and their corporations, indenture to student debt, etc. That's the legacy of both Republican and Democrat regimes since the 1970s-i.e. the past 50 years now.

Apart from weak logic and absurd (not so hidden) assumptions of the Open Letter, there's the voting evidence as well as Hillary's own self-destructive arrogance that explain the Democrats loss of the swing states in 2016 and thus the rise of Trump.

First, the Left Liberal authors of the Open Letter in question fail to explain that in the swing states Libertarian and other independent voters cast three and four times the votes for Trump than the Green party cast for its candidate, Dr. Jill Stein, in 2016. SO was it the Greens' fault? The Libertarians? Other third parties?

No, none of the above. Hillary herself lost the swing states and handed Trump the presidency when she refused to even bother to campaign in states like Michigan, Wisconsin, and barely showed up until the very end when it was already too late. Hillary thought she had the 'blue collar' vote in those states wrapped up and arrogantly ignored campaigning there. She ignored them. Took them for granted. And no one votes for someone who arrogantly ignores them and takes them for granted. Even if no Greens voted at all, Hillary would have lost the swing states. But the Open Letter would have us believe it was someone else's fault, not Hillary's.

If the Democrat leadership wants to win back swing state votes, it needs someone 'not Hillary'. But Joe Biden is just another corporate moneybag wing Hillary clone. Not for nothing is he known as 'bankers friend Joe' from Delaware (where many big banks have their headquarters and politically own the state). Ditto for the corporate Dems backup candidate, Mike Bloomberg, a lifelong Republican billionaire only recently joined the corporate wing of the Dems.

The fundamental argument of the Left Liberals' in their Open Letter is not just stop Trump by any means but, their argument behind the argument that there's a fundamental difference in voting for a Democrat. (Or at least the corollary argument that the Democrat won't screw us as badly as will the Republican).

But what does the historical evidence show? Have the Corporate Democrats been really any better over the past half century?

American voters, especially today's Millenials, and now the GenZers, in polls are saying 'a plague on both houses' of Democrats and Republicans. They have lost hope of either party making a difference in their lives. They see both as contributing to their deteriorating conditions and near hopeless future, consisting of a lifetime of precarious, part time/temp jobs, with no benefits, working two and sometimes even three jobs to make ends meet, without affordable rents, and no chance of owning a home, living a life of indentured labor paying \$1.6 trillion in student loans to the US government (at 6.8% interest, by the way, while bankers pay 1.6%), without affordable health insurance (including the soaring deductibles under Obamacare), unable to afford to even start a family. It's a bleak prospect,



created by both parties over recent decades.

It's not coincidental that polls show, by well more than 50%, even as high as 70%, that the more than 50 million Millennials and GenZers prefer something called 'socialism' (although they're probably not sure what that means except 'none of the present').

If the DLC-Corporate-moneybag wing of the Democrat leadership puts up a Biden or a Bloomberg-(i.e. latter their fallback at the Democrat party convention after no one gets the nomination on the first vote)-even more youth will not vote Democrat. And not just in the swing states. And if the Democrat leaders continue to scuttle the Sanders nomination-which they did in 2016 and show signs now of doing again in 2020-the Dems themselves, not a Green party candidacy, will once again have put Trump in office. It won't be the Greens.

Of course Republican 'red state' control of electoral college votes is being ensured by voter suppression and gerrymandering. That will play a role as well. But here the Democrats' loss of state legislatures and governorships under Obama, due to his ineffective economic policies in 2010 and after, have enabled that suppression and gerrymandering largely to happen as well. It made possible the Republican capture of two thirds of state legislatures, many of which have been pushing the voter suppression and gerrymandering.

It's not for nothing that Obama is sometimes referred to by youth as 'president Jello'-meaning he appears to move left and right but really is stuck in one place.

The Left Liberals' Open Letter buys the Democrat moneybag wing's argument that a Joe Biden (or Mike Bloomberg) argument that Corporate Democrat programs and policies are fundamentally better for average voters than would be Trump's.

They think that the typical working class voter in the swing states, that abandoned Hillary in 2016 (or actually vice-versa), can't figure out the game. Or that youth voters today can't either. But they're wrong.

Voters remember it was Bill Clinton had enabled NAFTA and sent millions of heartland American jobs offshore. It was Clinton that allowed hundreds of thousands of skilled tech workers into the US every year under H1-B/L-1 visas. It was Clinton that gave China preferred trading rights and allowed the shift of US manufacturing supply chains (and millions more good paying jobs) to China. It was Clinton that allowed corporations to 'check the box' on their tax forms and thereby not pay taxes on foreign profits. It was Clinton that permitted companies to divert funds from pension plans to pay for their corporations' share of escalating health care costs. It was Clinton that allowed the deregulation of financial institutions that paved the way for subprime mortgages and the crash of 2008-09. The list is longer still.

And what about the corporate Democrats' last minute hand picked candidate in 2008, Barack Obama? It was Obama that gave corporations \$6 trillion in tax cuts from 2009-16, almost twice that even George W. Bush gave them. It was Obama who agreed to \$1.5 trillion in social program spending cuts in 2011-13, thus taking back more than twice his 2009 recovery package of \$878 billion. It was Obama who extended Bush's tax cuts two years, 2010-12, and then made them permanent after 2013, amounting to another \$5 trillion tax cuts for business and investors. It was Obama who continued Free Trade deals despite their obvious effects on jobs and wages, and then tried to push through the TPP trade deal. It was Obama who had the Federal Reserve bail out the banks and investors with the tune of at

least \$4.5 trillion, while he gave a mere \$25 billion to bail out just a few of the 14 million who lost their homes. It was Obama who let Hillary start wars in Honduras to save the big landowners there, and then gave Hillary the green light in Libya to start another, creating that failed state there (as her hubby Bill did in Somalia). It was Obama that authorized and set the precedent for assassinations by drones (over 500 times on his watch). It was Obama who supported the US central bank, the Federal Reserve, to continue loaning banks free money, at an interest rate of 0.15% for seven years, long after the banks were bailed out, while charging millions of US students interest of 6.8% on their student loans to the government.

This is the decades long record that the Left Liberals want the US working class, students, and others to vote for again. Their argument is 'anything but Trump' will be better. But was it? Will it? Trump might give us war with Iran. But Democrats might with Russia. Both would give us invading Venezuela and continuing to rape South America.

I'm not talking here about Sanders, who the corporate wing will never allow as the Democrat party candidate in 2020. In fact, now that Sanders is rising in the polls and primaries, the corporate wing of the Democrats attack on him has intensified. Not just from Hillary, but from Warren, from the New York Times, and, as we'll soon see, from all quarters of the Liberal Elite and their media and their grass roots operatives. Observing how Trump captured the Republican party, two years ago the Democrats' leaders changed the rules of the game on how the party will run its convention this summer. They are prepared to scuttle Sanders by any means necessary.

But our Left Liberal intellectuals say we should vote for their candidate, Joe, if it comes down to that, just to beat Trump. But Trump will eat 'ole Joe' alive in a one on one competition, sad to say. They keep saying they want a candidate that can beat Trump. Then push one who cannot. And the Left Liberals want us to vote for Joe and not for a Green or anyone else. That's the only way to win! It may be the sure way to lose!

Vote for Joe and hold your nose, they say. The Left Liberal intellectuals, who are mostly well ensconced in secure and decent paying academic jobs, won't be impacted much by Joe's or Mike's or Pelosi's or Shumer's policies. But the rest who need a change will be.

The Open Letter represents just another form of 'Liberal' telling us to vote for another Liberal. Where has that gotten us?

It's the old 'shell game': Republicans make their capitalists filthy rich and ruin the economy in the process. Corporate Democrats come in and make the same even richer while failing to solve the crisis. Their failure allows the Republicans to point to their failed recovery, again to lie to us, and get back in. The process starts all over. It's been that way for at least 50 years.

And the Left Liberal intellectuals want us to buy into it for another 50?

I'd support Sanders, but he'll never get the Democrat nomination. Even if he wins the primaries. For this isn't the Democrat party of FDR any more, as much as Bernie would like it to be. It's a corporate wing run party since Bill Clinton. And the Left Liberal intellectuals have bought into the corporate wing's lie yet again, as they always have in a crisis.

One wonders if they'll vote for Sanders, should he run as an independent after the Democrat leadership denies him the nomination at their convention this summer. But I bet they'd still



vote for Joe. (Correct that: Mike).

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